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THOUGHTS

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

JESUS OF NAZARETH

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROVIDENCE R.I.

BY

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THOUGHTS

I

When I entered upon the duties of the Christian ministry in Philadelphia, some three-and-thirty years ago, I very early learned that there was, belonging nominally to one or another of the orthodox denominations, or having no connection with any church, a growing number of individuals who were in doubt, not as to the claims of any particular form of Christian belief, but as to *the historical truth of Christianity itself*. Persons of this class had very little interest in determining which of the interpretations of the Bible, the Trinitarian or the Unitarian, were correct. For, either way, it did not mend the matter for them; as they had pretty much made

up their minds that the Scriptures being, as they suspected, scarcely anything more than a mere collection of legends, were deserving of very little credit.

In fact, what has now grown to be a conspicuous mark of our times, was, even then, more than a quarter of a century ago, becoming very clear. The unworthy representations of our religion, so long and widely prevalent, were producing in rapid and rank abundance their natural fruit, unbelief,—secret or openly expressed. It was not unusual to hear doubts avowed as to whether such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed.

Although the scepticism which false religion had so abundantly generated, was not always so ignorant as to go to the extreme of questioning the actual existence of Jesus Christ, yet that there was anything in his history at all extraordinary was very often denied. The wonderful facts related concerning him were held to be all of a piece with the fables usually obscuring the early history of the established religions of mankind. Indeed, what faith there was remaining among many intelligent men, or that was

professed, was hardly anything more than a timid habit of time-serving. That religion should be patronized in one form or another, was considered highly respectable; but then it was not for any intrinsic truth which it was believed to possess, but for mere reasons of State, and because there was a vague, conservative impression abroad, that Churches and Sundays, somehow or other, conduced to the good order of society. Under the rose, men had their own opinions, and very free opinions oftentimes they were; and one of them was that, in all probability, the author of Christianity was a wise and good man, but that his history, as it is given in the New Testament, is a tissue of fables, with only here and there perhaps a filament of truth, and that the origin of the Christian religion, like that of other long-established religions, is lost in a cloud of fiction.

I remember, years ago, asking an intelligent gentleman, a highly respected resident of a western city, what the state of religious opinion was in his neighborhood, and whether there were many adherents of liberal Christianity

there. His reply was, that thinking men in that region had got quite beyond Unitarianism. This tendency of opinion, towards the utter rejection of the historical truth of Christianity, has, in the course of time, become more and more strongly marked. On this side of the Atlantic it has found its fullest avowal in the writings of Theodore Parker, of whom, by the way, it is only simple justice to say, that, while he publishes the boldest opinions in theology, and questions nearly all the historical details of primitive Christianity, he shows by word and work, a faith truly apostolic in those high and broad principles of right and humanity, which are the vital elements of the Christian religion.

Perceiving the state of mind, of which I speak, all around me, among persons whose intelligence and culture commanded my respect; seeing also the very unsatisfactory representations of Christianity that were made, and upon what erroneous grounds, and with what contempt of natural reason its authority was urged; aware too that there were some things which, at first sight, afforded a plausible justification of these radical doubts, and, finally, desirous of

being thoroughly assured in my own mind, and of finding out how much of truth there is in the New Testament History, I was moved, very early in my ministry, to examine it anew, with increased earnestness.

A direction was thus early given to my mind which it has never lost. From that time, I have always been most interested in endeavoring to minister to the condition, rather of those who find it difficult to believe Christianity at all, than of those who are hesitating between the liberal and the orthodox interpretations of Christian truth. And what I have chiefly wished to do is, not to pull down what I account error, but to build up what I have found to be true; not to deny, but to affirm. In accordance with this wish, I have sought to ascertain what may be affirmed beyond the possibility of refutation, concerning Christianity, considered as an historical fact.

While I have no love of destroying, merely for the sake of destroying, yet, in the endeavor to make manifest the historical truth of Christianity, whatever erroneous opinions or doctrines I find littering the ground on which I

would build, I do not hesitate, with as little noise or dust as possible, to put aside, so that the truth may stand firmly based in its rightful place, and in its full unobstructed proportions.

The result of my studies, in preparing for the ministry in the Theological School at Cambridge, under the late learned Professor Norton, had been a very satisfactory conviction of the substantial truths of the New Testament History. I was very early persuaded that there were good reasons for this conviction, could they only be worthily set forth.

I have always been of the faith also, that truth of every kind must have marks of its own; and that, intrinsically, it must be as distinguishable from fable as light from darkness, as the work of God from the work of man, as Nature from Art and Artifice.

Strong in this persuasion, after I was settled in the Christian ministry, I resumed, as I say, the study of the Four Gospels. Since, amidst endless confusion and conflict of opinions, Jesus of Nazareth has always been recognized by his followers as the supreme authority in regard to Christian doctrines, I desired, first of

all, to discover what he was. Accordingly, my attention was mainly given to the Four Accounts of his Life and Teachings. Taking them in hand as mere human compositions, and as I would any other books, I endeavored to examine them as if they were then for the first time placed before me, with freedom and with candor, chiefly desirous to determine, not what mistakes or contradictions they may contain, but, the probable existence of mistakes and contradictions being conceded, how much of truth there is in these records.[1] In the en-

[1] It is hardly necessary to say, that since I was of age to take interest in such inquiries, I have never been able to entertain the idea of the miraculous inspiration of the writers of the New Testament, or indeed of any portion of the Bible, —an idea which owes its existence to ignorance or oversight of obvious and undeniable facts. As for example: For more than a thousand years the Scriptures were perpetuated, not by means of this comparatively accurate instrument of transmission, the art of printing, but by the very imperfect and fallible method of transcription. Of course they were liable to countless errors, and they show these errors (of transcribers) on every page. I question whether there be a dozen consecutive words in the New Testament that read the same in all the hundreds of MSS. which have been collated. The

deavor to ascertain the truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth, whether it should prove much or little, I have aimed to put out of view, as much as possible, popular opinions and doctrines, all disputed and disputable points, and, to use the words of the wise and liberal Jortin, "to reduce things to the venerable Christianity of the New Testament."[1]

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various readings amount to some hundreds of thousands,—an alarming fact, by the way, only to those who stickle for the inspiration of the letter. (Amidst all these literal variations, the sense remains substantially the same in all the MSS.) But if these books were originally penned by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, it is absolutely impossible now to determine with absolute certainty which is the original and inspired reading. Is it to be imagined that the Holy Spirit interposed in the composition of the Scriptures, but took no care to protect them from influences which were certain to make that interposition worthless? But I am not going to discuss the question in regard to the Inspiration of the Scriptures. I am writing for those who are prepared to regard the narratives of the Life of Jesus as human compositions, to be dealt with as we deal with all other books when the aim is to ascertain their contents.

[1] "As the opposers of the Gospel have frequently had recourse to arguments *ad hominem*, and have taken advantage from modern systems, and from the writings of divines of this

After delivering courses of week-day evening lectures on the Four Gospels for four consecutive winters, I published, in 1836, a small volume entitled, "*Remarks on the Four Gospels*," in which I gave some of the results of my studies. Two years afterwards this work was republished in a much enlarged form with such numerous additions as justified the adoption of a new title for the work. It was called, "*Jesus and his Biographers.*" After an interval of twelve years, in 1850, I published "*A History of Jesus;*" and, in 1853, a new edition of this work, with a brief introduction and a few notes. In this last volume, as in the works that preceded it, my purpose was to make the New Testament history self-evident; to show, in the life of Jesus, the unmistakable marks of reality.

And now, as I look back to those publica-

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or that persuasion, so the defenders of Revelation have often found themselves under the necessity of reducing things to the venerable Christianity of the New Testament, and of adventuring no farther, and of declaring the rest as not essential to the cause and to the controversy."—*Remarks on Eccl. Hist. Preface.*

tions, how very defective do they appear! How far short do they fall of an adequate statement of the truth! Could I only do justice to my own convictions! My present endeavor is to supply, to some extent, the deficiencies of my previous attempts. I return to the subject with an interest which has lost none of its keenness, and which knows no weariness. I would speak out my thoughts of Christ utterly. Whether I succeed in communicating them to others, the bare attempt will be its own bountiful reward. I shall not embarrass myself by undertaking to write system-wise.[1] The subject itself has no-

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[1] "There is an order of imperfect intellects, under which mine must be content to rank. . . . The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of truth. She presents no full front to them, —a feature or a side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game, peradventure, and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. . . . They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their

thing systematic in it. There has always been much talk of the *Christian Scheme*. Never was phrase so entirely out of place. Jesus had no scheme. It was no form of thought that he constructed. It was a Spirit that he breathed, a Life that he lived, free, genial, spontaneous. He dealt, not in carefully elaborated arguments, but in affirmations, that found their fullest expressions in his being, and which thus come to the understanding through the heart.

I lay down, therefore, no plan to be filled out. Whatever unity there may be in the execution of this work, must come of itself. I shall endeavor not to repeat myself, at least in form. I please myself with the hope that others will find satisfaction in what gives me ever fresh delight.

I suppose that much that I shall offer will be

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defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematizers, and would but err more in attempting it."—*C. Lamb.* May I not quote these words almost as much for the pleasure of quoting them as for the sake of entering a plea for the rambling character of the following pages, without a thought of arrogating any peculiar fellowship with the fine genius that penned them?

offensive to orthodox believers. I am sorry for that. But I beg leave to say to all such, who may chance to open this book, that it is written, not for them, but for those whom the orthodox creeds, so far from satisfying, have repelled from the subject altogether, and before whom the alternative lies, not between such views as are here presented and the popular representations of Christianity, but between these views and none.

I DO not consider that I regard the Man of Nazareth with the admiring reverence that he may justly claim. Far is it from my thoughts to imagine that I have found, and that I duly value, all the treasures of truth and beauty that are, to use the pregnant phrase of Paul, "hidden in Christ." My reverence for him, I well know, is very weak. It is, as yet, but in the bud. Were it all that it should be, I should be a man sanctified and inspired by a friendship the most ennobling.

And yet faint as is my veneration for him,

how seldom do I find any who speak of him as he should be spoken of; any who appear cordially to sympathize with even my inadequate appreciation of him! Not that he is not spoken of in the most exalted terms. The strongest possible language of love and homage is lavished upon him. But it is easy to see that it is, to a great extent, formal. It has little that is genial in it. It is without discrimination, without an intelligent perception of his personal qualities. It is mere hearsay; the hollow echo of tradition and conformity. It is not inspired by any personal acquaintance with him.

How could it be otherwise? At the hazard of seeming arrogant, I avow my conviction that I have myself caught, through the thick mists of superstition that have been gathering round him for long ages, a glimpse of his actual person. Dim as it is, it makes my heart so burn within me, at times, that my persuasion is irresistible that it is a true vision and no illusion. But how have I obtained it? By the long study of years, by the possession of peculiar opportunities, and by striving to free my mind from all those prejudices of early education, which so

effectually prevent us from seeing with our own eyes.

As then the little light that I have found has been caught in this way,—by long and earnest study,—how can it be expected that others, who have given the subject no special attention, and who have been necessarily preoccupied with very different things, should have any vivid personal idea of Jesus of Nazareth; most especially, when for ages, Error has been weaving its web all over the history of his life so thickly, that the simplicity of the narrative is no longer perceived, and the narrative itself has almost ceased to be legible; and this thick network of error has been cherished as sacred truth, and, generation after generation, men have been educated to regard it so religiously, that the influence of the error continues to trammel them greatly, long after the error itself has been renounced by their understandings. The paralyzing pressure continues to be felt after the weight has been thrown off.

This subject does not command any earnest attention even in the religious world, as it is called. I do not find any persons who are really interested in examining the History of Christ—pursuing the study with a strong curiosity, and in the full belief that there is yet a great deal more light to break forth from it. It seems to be settled in the general mind that we know nearly all about it that is ever to be known, that there is little or nothing left to be explored.

When I perceive how little of intelligent interest is shown in this study, I am sometimes led to ask myself whether I do not exaggerate its importance, whether it really have the worth I ascribe to it, whether it lie in the nature of the case that it should command any wide and deep interest. And then I ask also, whether they may not have reason on their side, who, wearied out with the disputation that has afflicted the world in regard to Christ, and, despairing of anything like satisfaction, appear virtually to say: "What is the use? Let us give over the attempt to know the precise truth concerning him." They have made up their

minds, apparently, to let his memory die out. They would fain dismiss the idea of him altogether, dim and confused as it is, as a thing which the world is outgrowing, and as no longer competent to meet any human wants. Indeed, to numbers of intelligent and not light-minded persons, the subject has become a very Gorgon's head. Present it before them, and they are instantly turned into stone. They have not a thought to utter about it.

But I cannot sympathize with this indifference, or this despair, much as there is to produce them. I know and freely concede that a false theology has given a false importance to Jesus Christ, assigning him such a position that, not only has the one Infinite Father been hidden from human sight, but man, man himself, has been superseded. Transferring to Christ his own incommunicable responsibility, man has lost faith in his own competency to see and think for himself. But this is the influence of a false representation of the Man of Nazareth. Rightly understood, he does not hide the Infinite Goodness, he illustrates it. He does not overpower men, he inspires them. He

breaks their chains, and invites them to a larger freedom. But, without reference to the influence he exerts, I cannot endure to think that such a person as Jesus has lived only to be misrepresented, living and dead, only to be wrangled about for long ages; and now, at last, without ever having been, since the Apostolic age, really known as he was, to be spoken of with a patronizing air, as if he were on the whole a wonderful man for his time, but had better now be dismissed as behind the age. The idea! O how long and wearily does he wait for an age to come in sight of him! Mankind cannot be so ignoble as this treatment of him would imply. Multitudes there are, I doubt not, who would leap to do him honor, were he seen in his true character.

In the name of all that is just, let him not vanish away before we have at least made an earnest effort to do him justice. Let us try sincerely, and without fear, to see him as he was in simple truth. Perhaps we shall discover a greatness in him beyond what, with all our exaggerations, we have ever yet dreamed. At all events let us be just to him, and strive to see

him as he was. So much is surely due to a character so extraordinary. After we have arrived at some fair estimate of him, then, if there be any in whom he creates no new sentiment of greatness and truth, in heaven's name, let them part with company with him, and go their way without the inspiration of his fellowship. But so long as the memories of the great and good are the world's most precious possessions, the perennial fountains of its deepest life, of all that have ever lived, let us not consent that Jesus of Nazareth shall be forever neglected or misunderstood.

I would have it distinctly seen that it is chiefly for the sake of simple justice and honor, that I now plead for a full recognition of Jesus Christ. I am not speaking, in these pages, in the interest of any theological system whatever, or because I consider him to be necessary to the religion of our time and place. I desire to study him without reference to the exigencies of any existing mode of religious faith, or to any relation he may be believed to sustain to the salvation of men. I wish to see him as he was. So much, at least, is due to him and to

ourselves. I have no aim now beyond the payment of this debt.

The tendency of mankind to deify personal greatness is so strong, and has shown itself so unfavorable to individual independence, so conducive to mental bondage, and in the case of Christ in particular, that some minds appear to be afraid to dwell, as I propose, upon the personality of Jesus, lest, magnifying it unduly, they should be led themselves, or should lead others, back again into the old error. But does it not argue a mental weakness of the very same sort that we dread, a want of mental self-dependence, when we forego the enjoyment of a truth from a fear that it may be abused, to say nothing of the insensibility which it evinces to be indifferent to the great and the good? When we estimate them aright, there is, not fear but love, not cowardice but courage, not weakness but strength, the inspiration of the Highest, in their communion.

And especially should Jesus Christ be thoroughly studied, and as accurately as possible known, since, as I conceive, we have such singularly rare means of knowing him, if we will only approach the study of him with the freedom and fairness which he loved, and upon which he so generously relied.

Very brief, indeed, are the accounts of him that have come down to us,—mere sketches, put together with so little regard to order, that it is impossible to say how long his public life lasted,—collections of anecdotes, for the most part told with exceeding brevity. And yet such as they are, they let us into the personal character of Jesus in a manner the most remarkable. I do not believe that there has ever existed a person, of whom, without having any immediate personal knowledge of him, we can form so vivid an idea as of Jesus of Nazareth.

This one fact that, in the providence of heaven, the memory of Jesus has been preserved in the world as the memory of no other person has been preserved, with an unequalled distinctness,—does it not prove how valuable his memory is? Its worth is shown by its

being perpetuated in such clearness of outline, in such freshness of coloring. And this too in the natural course of things, without any special interposition, either in the composition or in the preservation of the accounts of him which have been published throughout the world in almost every tongue.

I cannot imagine how anything could be more entirely in the natural order of things than the New Testament narratives were, as I regard them, both in their origin and in the way in which they have been perpetuated. When, precisely, they were written cannot be determined with certainty. They made their appearance, under the circumstances of the case, as a matter of course. Supposing such a person as Jesus to have had an existence, it seems to me that, sooner or later, just such accounts, as we have of him, must have made their appearance. They are just what was to be expected. It could not well be otherwise, things being left to take their course, but that, after a time, and before all the personal friends of Jesus, or all *their* friends, disappeared from the world, some written records of him, of his

sayings and acts, would rise into importance. Such a life as his could not possibly fail to find expression in the literature of the world. His friends, however, were not, and from the obvious facts of the case, it is evident could not have been, educated men. Their literary qualifications for the work of his biography were exceedingly limited. They had no literary character to make or to sustain, nor any knowledge of rhetorical rules to guide them. Consequently, as the whole style and structure of the Records show, the work was done with the utmost simplicity of design, with no thought on the part of the writers but to put into words, as well as they were able, their honest impressions. So much, at least, may be said of the first Three Gospels. Of the Fourth Gospel, I have a brief word to say by-and-by. Of the first three, it may be said without qualification, and of the fourth also, to a considerable extent, that the result is, that narratives are to be found in these books, constituting the substance of them; narratives which, artless as they are,—and they are as artless as the talk of children,—furnish us with the means of form-

ing a wonderfully distinct idea of him, the story of whose life they tell.

So it appears that his life had a natural truth, so obvious and impressive that neither was any special agency needed to prevent its being lost or to perpetuate its memory; nor, in order that it should be reported correctly, were any peculiar qualifications required beyond a certain honesty of mind. It was of that quality, so congenial to Nature, so surcharged with her own life, that she could not let it die, although there was no ready scribe at hand to record it, and no one seems to have thought of anything like a formal record of it until years after the disappearance of Jesus from the earth. It was in such perfect accord with the truth of things, that all things, by a natural affinity, took it up spontaneously, and floated it onward on the stream of time. It was as natural for it to continue, as it was for it to be, originally. Once in existence, it instantly became a living portion of the world's history. And it no more needed any special aid from God or man, in order that it should be perpetuated, than this

globe requires any interposing and added force to maintain it on its annual way.

In this fact I recognize decisive evidence of the special worth of Jesus Christ to the world. The idea of him, rendered as it is with such rare freshness in the New Testament, must be vital, or it would never have taken such a hold, stronger than adamant, upon the world, never have so fixed itself with such distinctness and prominence in the world's history; especially when it had such obstacles to overcome, mountains of ignorance, rivers and oceans of prejudice, partition-walls heaven-high, of custom, temperament, and language, dividing the nations. What was it that I just now heard from my window? A little colored child in the street singing a hymn about Jesus, the Saviour. Thus far away from remote, obscure Nazareth, centuries back, out of the depths of the Past, has his name come.

I no longer fear that, in studying his life and character, I am carried away by a fancy, ascribing to his history an exaggerated importance. The fact of its having been written and preserved as it has been without any extraordi-

nary intervention, I interpret as the well-nigh articulate testimony of Nature and Providence to its worth. They claim it for their own. It is theirs. And as theirs, ours.

For long ages the study has been to represent him in contrast with Nature, and in opposition to her. It has been, and still is, everywhere thought to be essential to the vindication of his authority, to prove that he was a *supernatural* being, in the sense of exceptional and anomalous. His acts are described as miracles, miracles being defined as departures from natural order, or violations thereof. He is represented as differing from every other intelligent being on earth in nature as well as in degree.

The consequence is such as we see all around us. Jesus has become a *nondescript* being. He is out of the sphere of our intelligent apprehensions, out of the reach of all genial human appreciation. Thus represented, he has ceased to be of flesh and blood, and has faded away into a vision vast but dim—but little more than a

name. We extend our arms to embrace him, and nothing real meets our grasp.

My purpose is directly the reverse. I seek to reinstate him *in* Nature, fully. I would show that, while he is new, original, in some most important respects unprecedented, he is a thoroughly natural human being, in nothing at variance with Nature, but always and in all respects, even in regard to those great gifts which are peculiar to him, "subject to the law of her consistency." Indeed, of all who have ever lived, I hold him to be the most profoundly natural, the fullest illustration of the genius of Nature, of her highest laws, of her most occult forces. And, viewing him thus, I hold it to be indescribably interesting that he should be seen as he is. How can we spare so grand an illustration of the import of Nature! We may spare the sun in heaven as well. He is a sun in the empyreum.

When it shall be made clearly to appear that he came and lived in conformity with natural laws, not in violation of them, who can estimate the benefits that must accrue! How much will be gained for him, for Christianity, and for the

progress of human thought! It will be equivalent to establishing on an impregnable foundation the reality of his history, to show its consonance with Nature; since truth alone consorts with that. And for the enlargement of the human mind the advantage will be, that the wonderful facts of the history of Christ, which now stand apart by themselves, as barren exceptions under the name of miracles, will be received as new and most expressive natural facts; giving us significant hints of a high spiritual philosophy, a philosophy of Life and of Death, of matter and of spirit, and of the mutual relations of these two.

How completely a mechanical philosophy has unhallowed Nature, how it has despoiled the great Temple of all its religious symbols, displacing its soul-inspiring harmonies with the monotony of a huge mechanism of blind laws, is disclosed by the fact that men deny the possibility of any certain communication from the Highest, except by a method that shall be seen to be a departure from the method of Nature.

As I look upon Christ, he comes, not in violation, but in the order, of Nature; not to suspend her laws, but to observe them; not to interrupt, but to reveal the harmony of things. He comes in the fulness of her genius, not an interposed, but a natural and all-reconciling Fact. And, in the light of his presence, the Universe is no longer a complication of blind mechanical forces, but slowly, grandly, the Diorama changes, and there rises all around us a majestic Sanctuary, not made with hands, wherein angels are ceaselessly ascending and descending in beneficent ministries, and glad tidings of love and hope sound evermore.

I AM aware that I appear to many to handle the New Testament histories with an unauthorized freedom; at one time rejecting passages and incidents in a very arbitrary manner, merely, as it has been said, to suit a very fanciful preconceived theory; at another time, laying the greatest stress upon some very slight circumstance, or a mere turn of expression.

I submit the following considerations in justification of the method which I observe.

1. Any one, who examines the Four Gospels with any attention, cannot fail to perceive that they are put together with very little care. The carelessness which marks these books, and of which numerous evidences might be adduced, I consider as resulting from and manifesting the unsuspecting confidence of truth. But however caused, or whatever it may indicate, it is a very obvious feature of these narratives.

2. It is equally undeniable, that for centuries they were perpetuated in manuscript, and they have, consequently, come to read so variously, that we cannot be perfectly sure, in any case, that we have the precise words of the original records.

These things being considered, I have no hesitation in rejecting passages and incidents which are clearly at variance with the pervading spirit and the plainest facts of the history. So much, briefly, for the grounds upon which I hold myself authorized to reject certain passages here and there.

But, since the Gospels are constructed without care, and the genuineness of the language is more or less uncertain, why do not these considerations, which have weight with me in the rejection of passages, have the same force in preventing me from laying stress upon minute particulars, upon a phrase, perhaps, or a word? For very plain reasons:

1. Because, however careless the Gospels, and however uncertain the original words, we should, nevertheless, scrutinize the minutest details, since, as frequent experience shows, truth is discovered, and falsehood detected by the very smallest accidents, which, being undesigned, have a weight far beyond that of a thousand formal witnesses.

2. And not only for this reason: because the smallest fact, a mere word, may furnish a clue to the truth, should we weigh every word; but also because the very carelessness, with which these writings are put together, affords the strongest presumption that any little details that are mentioned, are mentioned only because they are true. Whether they are true or not, must be determined by their accordance

with the pervading spirit and the plainest facts of the history. The Gospels are, to a most remarkable degree, unstudied; by which I mean, that particulars are stated therein, evidently not to serve a purpose or to make out a case, but simply because they were true. They struck and impressed the minds of the spectators, and so they came to be transcribed into the records. There is no other reason why they should have been recorded. And, since they were of this impressive nature, they must have had a forcible significance at the time, a vital connection with the main fact of which they were the particulars. To my mind it is clear, that the events recorded in the Gospels, almost in the literal sense of the word, recorded themselves. With a vividness beyond everything of the kind that I know of in human history, they stamped themselves on the minds of men; not always, never perhaps in any instance making a complete impression, but yet almost always leaving the body or shape of some one or a few circumstances or features, and these sometimes not the most prominent, so sharply defined, that from one particular thus given, however mi-

nute, we may infer the whole event. I ask attention to the following instances in illustration of what I say.

1. The direction of Jesus to the bystanders to go to the assistance of Lazarus, when he appeared at the entrance of the tomb, "bound hand and foot in the grave-clothes:" "*Loose him, and let him go,*" is, in itself, a minute circumstance. There always seemed to me, when as a child I read this account, to be a sudden descent here to a very small particular. Why did Jesus give this direction? Or why did the narrator think it worth recording? These questions are more than answered, when, supposing Lazarus to have actually appeared staggering in his shroud, we bring into view the effect which such an apparition must have had on those present. They stood gazing there, in unutterable amazement, bereft of all presence of mind, and it was natural that Jesus should have recalled them to themselves, and bade them go and help Lazarus. Can any one fail to see how this brief incident attests the reality of the scene?

2. The retaining of the very words of Jesus

in the case of the restoration of the little daughter of Jairus, "*Talitha cumi;*" and in the instance of the deaf man, "*Ephphatha;*" and of the precise exclamation of Mary, when she first recognized Jesus on the morning of his resurrection, "*Rabboni;*" all translatable and immediately translated, is to my mind wondrously in accord with truth, and to be accounted for only by the reality of the circumstances which attended these utterances. (*Jesus and his Biographers.*)

3. In the account[1] given of the blind beggar, Bartimæus, whose sight Jesus restored, we are told that when Jesus stopped and bade them bring to him the beggar, who was calling aloud and entreating his pity, the poor man, "*casting away his garment,*" rose and went to Jesus. These few words, which I italicize,—do they not reveal the natural and intense emotion of the blind man?

4. To mention only one other instance in point. When, upon the departure of the wealthy young man who came running to Jesus, asking what he should do to inherit

[1] Mark x, 46–52.

eternal life, Jesus declared that it was impossible for the rich to enter the Divine kingdom, the kingdom of the self-sacrificing; and when the disciples were exceedingly amazed, because the kingdom they were looking for was to abound in riches, and when they expressed their astonishment, exclaiming, "Who then can be saved?" *i. e.*, Who then can be admitted into the kingdom, if there are to be no rich men there? it is recorded in the first Gospel that Jesus "*beheld*" them; and, in the second, that Jesus, "*looking upon them*, saith, &c." Now I infer, from the fact that his *look* on this occasion is thus particularly mentioned in two of the Gospels and yet with a variation, that it must have been of so impressive a character that it imprinted itself upon the minds of those on whom it was fixed, and could not be forgotten.

But it is needless to multiply examples of this sort. The Gospels are full of them. And they stamp the records so deeply with the impress of reality, that, for my own part, I am reconciled to all the obscurity in which the origin and history of the Gospels are wrapt.

In studying the New Testament history in this manner, I seem to myself to be endeavoring to restore some grand old work of Art, a magnificent picture by some great master. In one part, it is covered with the dust and dimness of time. In another, rude hands have distorted it with their false drawing, or bedaubed it with barbarous color. The world has insisted upon hanging it upside down, in a bad light, and out of the reach of the eye; its disfigurements have been mistaken for beauties, and all honest examination has been denounced as sacrilege. Nevertheless, here and there, by such criticism as I am able to use, I discover a hand, a foot, an eye, drawn to the life; or, it may be, a noble sweeping line, or a majestic fold of a garment, or a gleam of color,—all satisfying me that there is a masterpiece underneath, some day to be restored in its completeness, or, so far as it was completed originally, to witch the world with a vision of immortal beauty.

The attempts which I have made in previous

publications to set forth my views of what are called the miracles of Jesus, were very imperfect, owing in a considerable degree to some obscurity in my own mind. My thoughts on this subject have since become clearer; and I trust I shall now be able to make myself better understood.

I set no value upon the miracles of the New Testament, considered as departures from the order of nature. So far from contending for them, in this sense, I do not believe that such things as miracles, thus defined, are possible. I hold the idea of a suspension or violation of the laws of Nature, to be essentially incredible. Although the word *miracle* is constantly used in this sense, no such idea is expressed by it, etymologically considered. According to the derivation of the word, a miracle is simply a wonder, nothing more. A thing may be wonderful without being a suspension of the laws of Nature. In the primary sense of the term, all things, the most common and natural, the laws of Nature themselves, are miraculous, and miraculous, not only in the sense of being wonderful, but also as they manifest the presence in

Nature of an unknown, supernatural, or rather, *supersensuous* power. So far from rejecting miracles in this sense, I believe in nothing else.

But not only is there nothing in the derivation of the word that requires us to consider the events to which the term is applied in the New Testament, as violations of the order of Nature, I am at a loss to understand how we can pronounce a fact to be a departure from natural laws without first knowing all those laws. But who presumes to know all the laws of Nature? Until we do know them all, we cannot assert that any fact violates them. It may be a very singular fact, such as has never been known before. Nevertheless we cannot know that it involves a departure from natural order. The presumption is, that it is directly the reverse. It may seem to violate what we consider the laws of Nature; just as the fact that water increases in bulk, by being frozen, violates the law that regulates the freezing of all other bodies, and by which they are contracted in size

with the diminution of their heat. But there is here no real, but only an apparent, violation of natural laws. It is not Nature that is transcended, but only our very limited knowledge of Nature. So long at least as our knowledge is comprehended within such very narrow bounds, how can we presume to pronounce a fact a miracle in the sense of a suspension of the natural order of things?[1]

But even were it admissible thus to pro-

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[1] "In all apparent anomalies, the inductive philosopher will fall back on the primary maxim that it is always *more probable that events of an unaccountable and marvellous character are parts of some great fixed order of causes unknown to us, than that any real interruption occurs.*"—(*Essays on the Spirit of the Inductive Philosophy, &c., by the Rev. Baden Powell.*) In the same work (p. 471), Professor Powell condemns Hugh Miller's "Judaical" theology, because it does not recognize the fact that "the great principle of natural laws and the order of physical causes, is as entirely the emanation of the Supreme Mind, as any supposed intervention could be, and, in fact, *the only true proof of it.*" It is to be regretted, by the way, that the Oxford Professor has not mentioned the names of a few of the "many eminent and orthodox divines" to whom he alludes (p. 473), as regarding miracles, not as "interruptions," but "as instances of the observance of some more comprehensive laws unknown to us."

nounce upon facts, and to distinguish miracles, I cannot perceive how outward miracles, addressed to the senses, can authorize moral statements, verbal propositions. I cannot see how any external demonstration of power can make a thing true to me, which has no evidence, in itself, of its being true. Power to produce the most wonderful physical effects instantaneously, does not imply or prove truth. Were a man to come to me, commanding me to lie, steal, and commit murder, in the name of God, what miracles, so called, that he might work, could attest his authority to enjoin these crimes as my sacred duties? What would it avail him, although he should turn the earth out of its orbit? I should suppose that either he was in league with evil spirits, or had obtained command of some occult science. Either of these suppositions would be far more probable than that he had authority from God to impose upon me immoral obligations.

It is not therefore because I need or desire miraculous attestations, commonly so called, to the authority of Christ, that I set a great value

upon the wonderful works that were done by him.

The value of the extraordinary works attributed to Christ lies in this, that, as things done by him, as his acts, they sustain a vital relation to his character, which they most strikingly illustrate, showing us the essential quality of his spirit. In my view, they are identified with his personal being; as, in the nature of things, the acts and the remarkable acts especially, of a man, are part and portion of the man himself. The conduct discloses the character.

This being premised, I cannot see how we can dream of ascertaining the distinctive character of Christ, while we leave out of our estimate of him the most extraordinary things attributed to him. With just as much, nay, with even more propriety, might we undertake to leave out of view his precepts and parables. These illustrate his truth and wisdom. But actions, it is proverbial, speak louder than words, and are much more satisfactory signs of what a man is. It is in this respect that the

wonderful works of Christ create in me the deepest interest, a very great curiosity to ascertain what they really were, to know all about them that is to be known.

THE common idea is that they are valuable mainly as displays of Almighty Power, suspending its own laws in order to attest a Divine authority in Christ. Whereas, to my mind, their chief interest lies, not at all in the power which they exhibit, but in their moral quality, in the motive that prompted them. They have a very decided moral character, and the motive that prompted them becomes plain upon examination. I find them to be as truly penetrated by his spirit as his limbs were animated by his blood. In and through them I catch sight of the God-like greatness of his personal character, and of an unselfishness as beautiful as the same quality illustrated by his cross.

It is not at all as demonstrations of mere power that I admire what are known as his miracles. Demonstrations of mere power are

all around me, at all times, in all the aspects of Nature, in my own body, in the inscrutable miracles of sight, of articulate speech, and of hearing, and of the communication of thought by means of these, in the fact that I sit here at this moment, inscribing these characters on this page, with the idea of communicating my thoughts to other minds distant and unknown. Such familiar instances are just as wondrous indications of a power above and beyond what is visible, as any fact recorded in the New Testament. It is not, therefore, for their physical power that I prize the miracles of Jesus.

I VALUE the wonderful works of Christ because they disclose to me his character, because they express his spirit.

The character of Christ is the exposition of my religion, my Christianity. It is my Confession of Faith. As far as I am able to see, it was the only religion of the first disciples; it was all that they received from him. They were not instructed by him in any doctrines so

called. All that he ever taught them, by word of mouth, was of the most informal character. Nothing can possibly be more simple and incidental than his teachings. The sum of all that he taught them was, that they were to love God with their whole hearts, and one another as themselves. He taught them no theology. But there was one thing he did give them, one new thing: he inspired them with an enthusiastic affection for himself. And this personal sentiment was the germ of a new religion in their hearts, sown there amidst a tangled growth of old religious prejudices and superstitions. In loving him, they loved what was true and generous. Their simple affection for him, which, it is most interesting to observe, he inspired them with unconsciously, not so much by what he said and did as by what he was, and which grew in them without any effort on their part, without their being aware of it, became the central spring of their existence, sanctifying them and re-creating them. In one word, it was their Religion; and a Religion of a Divine origin, the pure work of God, wrought in them without the conscious agency of any human will, either theirs or Christ's.

Multitudes since their time, multitudes now cherish a strong feeling about Christ. There is a great ado made about "the love of Jesus." But it is a very different thing from the natural human affection felt for him by his first friends, and springing up and growing in them, just like the love that dwells among kindred. It is incoherent, mystical, when it is not cant. It does not spring from any intelligent perception of his personal traits. It is a zeal for a creed, for a church, for "the religion of the fathers," or for the dogma of "the Atoning Sacrifice," of which the name of Jesus has become the symbol; or for a social order and rights of property, which he is thought somehow to conserve. His name has long ceased to represent his personal qualities as a man. Were "the love of Christ," on which so much stress is laid, the result of a clear insight into the generous attributes of his personal character, it is quite out of the question that those who cherished it could have been so exclusive, time-serving, and cruel, as Christians have been and are.

The truth is, the personal character of Jesus has been lost to sight through the dogma of his

Supreme Divinity, in the confounding idea of his Double Nature. The Unitarian denomination has been based and formed upon a denial of the truth of these representations. It was necessary, in the course of things, that this denial should be made, as it has been made, with signal ability. But no denomination can long subsist on a denial. There is no religious life, no spiritual nutriment, to be derived from a negative. We must have reasons for believing, as well as for not believing. So strong is this necessity, that a tendency appears among liberal Christians to return to the positive grounds of orthodoxy. They are growing sensible of the want of a faith that affirms. "Ice can make no conflagration." It is high time, therefore, that we should affirm, — affirm the humanity of Christ clearly and broadly; lest, halting on a barren denial, we become entangled in the teasing shreds of the old dogma of his mystical nature, and be drawn back again into bondage to "weak and beggarly elements." When the personal character of Jesus emerges in its natural beauty from the clouds of superstition in which it has been hid, then to us, as

to his first disciples, it will become a spring of all-purifying affection, a positive religion, exercising all our sensibilities, and contributing to that greatest of works, the regeneration of character.

How wearisome is the sight of man's abortive attempts to make himself holy! I have lost all confidence in them. Poor, ignorant, sinful creature that he is, he sets to work in good faith, and takes great pains to collect all sorts of spiritual machinery, doctrines, and creeds, and sacraments, "means of grace," as he calls them, and I know not what. He sets himself large tasks of self-denial and philanthropy and devotion. He goes to work with an energy one cannot but admire, building up, regardless of expense, huge Bible and Tract societies; but, in and through it all, he is so keenly and sleeplessly self-conscious, that, at every stage of the work, such an amount of self-conceit, like some poisonous gas, is generated, that the whole thing is spoiled through and through, and the result is most pitiable. The cheapest thing that

he manufactures is better, of its kind, than his religion. It makes a great show and noise,—a perpetual grinding, but no grist. It has neither beauty that we should desire it, nor strength that we can lean upon. It inspires no respect. It can stand no test. The worst passions shiver it into atoms by their outbursts, or get control of it and make it subservient to their base purposes.

How beautiful and how sure is the Divine method of making men good and religious! Into a world full of ignorance and sin, men are sent,—one man at least appears, who, by his rare personal qualities, and by the mighty touch of a nature common to him and to all men, awakens reverence and faith, and makes the whole world kin. Only consider how much is done for men when there is created in them reverence for what is venerable, and love of what is lovely. It is a good thing to be beloved, but to love is far better. Mark, too, how beautifully, beautifully because with the divine humility of Nature, this sacred sentiment, when

once planted in the heart and growing there, a scion from the Tree of Life, bears fruit for the sustenance of a man's whole being; fruit, of which, when he once partakes, he will not hunger and thirst any more. In the increasing ardor of his affection, he forgets himself. He no longer officiously busies himself with his spiritual welfare; and consequently, the Divine work goes on in him uninterrupted by his intermeddling. So far from foolishly priding himself upon the growth he is making in every grace, humility perhaps, whenever he looks at himself, it is only to be humbled indeed at the contrast between himself and the goodness which he is learning heartily to revere. Nevertheless, he cannot learn to love what is pure without parting with his own impurities. He cannot reverence the large-minded and remain narrow. He cannot love love, and continue selfish. This is the way in which man is regenerated in truth, and to the very centre. It is not a speedy work, but it is genuine and sure. The most imposing instances of it are those poor fishermen of Galilee, who were brought into personal acquaintance with the Man of Naza-

reth; and thereby, be it forever remembered, not so much by his saying and doing as by his being, were changed into renowned Apostles and martyrs of Eternal Truth. What he was to them, he may be again to us all. In his personal character, there is a natural spring of Religion, perennial and refreshing to every soul of flesh.

Certain it is, that the best things that we know of, the things that most nourish us, and are most powerful in giving life to the world, and in kindling man's aspirations, are the characters of the great and good. These it is that 'uphold and cherish' the world, and save men in the darkest times from the loss of great ideas and generous hopes. These it is, the great and good, whose names are the mighty spells which reanimate mankind when well-nigh borne down and vanquished in the great struggle of life.

Among all noble human characters, the character of this wondrous Jewish youth shines pre-eminent in its great simplicity, simple in a new and still most natural beauty. Were the

heavens to open over our heads, what vision could we behold there, which would give us such a sense of the Divine as comes to us through his human greatness!

Now, to this grand character of the Man of Nazareth, the singular acts ascribed to him are of indispensable importance, because they are its manifestations. They illustrate it. What manner of man he was,—the quality of his interior being, is to be ascertained through what he did and his way of doing it.

How do we know that the wonderful things related of Jesus actually happened? This is the great question. How do I satisfy myself that the miracles really occurred as they are represented?

To this inquiry, the first thing I have to say in reply is, that, if the acts ascribed to Jesus were not his acts at all, then they must be fabulous exaggerations, accretions that rapidly gathered from the wonder-loving atmosphere of the age around the simple truth, distorting and

concealing it. And if they are fabrications of this sort, they do not illustrate him, neither can they. In this case, they resemble artificial flowers fastened by children upon a living bush. All very beautiful they may look to the children. But there is no natural connection between them and the plant to which they are attached. The sap of that does not circulate in them. You can get no hint of the nature of the plant from an examination of these flowers. So I say, if the narratives of the miracles of Jesus are fictitious, they can be no illustrations of him. Or, if they are exaggerations so monstrous that we cannot now ascertain the actual facts of the case, so far from illustrating his character, they will only betray their own falsehood by their obvious inconsistency with it.

But the fact is, these narratives, rightly taken, do illustrate him. Improbable as these extraordinary events at first sight appear, they are found, upon a faithful examination, to be eminently characteristic of him. And it is this fact, that the miracles are *not* like the artificial flowers that I just now spoke of, but show very plain marks of being a natural growth, leaves

and blossoms of the living tree with which they are connected, that proves that they really took place, being inseparable portions of his nature and history.

Putting out of view all the miraculous parts of the history, taking only the teachings of Jesus, and those portions of the Records, which, stating nothing out of the ordinary course of things, are perfectly credible, and readily command assent, we are able to form some general idea of him. We see very clearly that he must have been a person of eminent wisdom and goodness. So much is admitted even by the most sceptical.

Now, may we not use this general idea of him which the most cursory reading of the New Testament gives us, as a criterion by which to determine the truth or falsehood of the stories that are told of him?

Whatever a man does, depicts the man on the minds of all beholders, and shows his quality. Everything that he does, always has a certain consistency with all else of his doing.

One and the same expression appears in every act. He cannot wholly disguise his looks or his gait. Accordingly, when any act or series of acts is attributed to one whom we know, we can at least tell, from what we know of him, whether it be like him. Now, so simple and elevated is the character of Jesus, as it may be gathered from the general tenor of his history, that it cannot be difficult to decide whether acts, so new and strange as the miracles, be in keeping with him or not; whether they be like him, so much like him, that in them we recognize him.

Suppose any one were to set himself at work to fabricate a variety of actions, and, describing them circumstantially and as done in the most public manner, like the miracles of the New Testament, should attribute them to some person with whose general traits of character we were already familiar. I say nothing of the difficulty of fabricating facts as various as the works recorded in the Gospels, and of keeping them consistent with one another in the midst of a great diversity of particulars; although this is a point not to be overlooked. But the

question now is: could such fabrications, even if they harmonized one with another, be mixed up with reality, and ascribed to an individual of known character, without our being able to decide whether it were like him to do such things?

Most especially would the facility of a decision in such a case be increased, if the acts in question were of a peculiar kind, and, in the fabrication of them, the inventor had no precedents to go by. I think it would be absolutely impossible to interweave fictitious miracles into the life of a person of so simple and grand a character as Jesus of Nazareth, without producing an incongruity obvious to the most ordinary understanding. The Apocryphal Gospels prove as much. Two things, the most opposite to conceive of: the character of Jesus on the one hand, and the working of miracles on the other; the former thoroughly natural, the latter to all appearances out of the course of Nature, were to be brought together, and so commingled that they should constitute one harmonious whole. This was the problem. This is the transcendent miracle which is believed to

have been wrought in the rude narratives of the New Testament, when it is maintained that the remarkable facts contained therein are fables.

Suppose the miracles of Jesus to be mere fabrications. They were invented then in a superstitious and wonder-loving age, for the sake of making him appear more remarkable. But is it conceivable that the passion for the marvellous, which, like all human passions, is blind to everything but its special object, could tamper in the slightest degree with the beautiful simplicity of his Life without deforming it? Would not such fictions inevitably destroy its unity and naturalness? Would not the bare idea of making him appear greater, by ascribing to him acts which he never performed, show at once that the real beauty of his character was not perceived? And how could those who did not understand his character fabricate facts that should be in harmony with that character?

What I say is this: the wonderful things which he is said to have done, so far from mar-

ring the symmetry of his being, do, with a few exceptions, most luminously illustrate its greatness. They are in the most consummate harmony with all his known and probable qualities. There is nothing that he said or did more strikingly characteristic of him than his miracles so called. Nothing that is told of him shows him to us more distinctly. Indeed, were his miracles left out of view, we should lose the most impressive means of knowing what manner of person he was. I trust this will appear in the following pages.

The miracles of Jesus being regarded, not as fables but as actual occurrences, the question arises: How were they wrought? By what means did he produce these astonishing effects?

I answer, not by a power breaking through or suspending the laws of Nature, but *by means of a natural gift.* As he was endowed by Nature with great sensibility and extraordinary quickness of apprehension, and clearness and depth of insight, as, indeed, we all come into life endowed with various powers, powers dif-

fering in different individuals in degree and kind, but alike wonderful, alike *miraculous*, in all, so was he naturally endowed with a power such as no other man has ever been known to possess. He could heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and, under certain conditions, raise the recently dead, and all by a simple volition. The power of producing these effects instantaneously was, as I conceive, just as natural to him, just as much a part of his nature, as the power to speak, to hear, to move, is of ours. It was not a power that he had acquired. It was a faculty native to him. How it came to him he could not tell, nor whence; save that, like all other power possessed by him or by any one, it was from God. He himself gave no other account of it. There was no other account of it to be given. The source of all power, whether ordinary or unusual, is God. The power of producing such striking effects by a brief act of the will was, in a word, the genius of Jesus. It came to him as it comes to a child to walk or to speak. It was a part and property of his nature.

Although this natural talent or gift, this magnetic force of will, was possessed by him as by no other man, yet it was a gift identical in kind with a power that exists in us all; and, indeed, I believe it to have been the same power carried out and developed in him to an uncommon degree.

Whatever may be thought of the claims of Animal Magnetism to be esteemed a science, it has abundantly shown this much at least: that the limits of the power inherent in the human will are not yet distinctly ascertained. That there is an untold amount of power in the will, has been too fully attested to admit of a doubt. Oftentimes, under peculiar conditions, that power has been so suddenly and mightily developed, as to cause instantaneously the most astonishing physical effects. We have all heard of cases in which violent diseases have been completely cured at once through a strong impression made upon the mind. We all know how powerfully the mind acts upon the body. I have myself had experience of the power of a mental state to cause the sudden and entire cessation of acute physical pain.

Such was the fine organization of Jesus, so exquisitely was he constituted, as his whole history shows, that the power which is only rudimental in other men, flowered out into a beautiful completeness in him; so that to effect instantaneous cures by his will was as natural to him and as easy as to breathe. I repeat, it was his genius, a gift that he was born with.

I INFER that he was naturally endowed with the power of producing these great effects instantaneously, from the manner in which he is represented as using it. I judge that it was a natural power, because it shows so naturally.

It appears always to have been at his command. It required no preliminary formalities. It came as easily to him as to speak. He uses no formula of adjuration, no appeal to any name or power above himself. He exerts his power with a manifest air of personal authority, as if there were nothing that he was so thoroughly conscious of as this power. At the same time, he does not appear to have thought

much of it himself. Or rather, he seems to have been unconscious that there was anything special in it. He thought no more of it, while he exercised it, than he thought of his feet when he was walking, or of his voice when he spoke. He shows no solicitude to prove to others that he possessed this power. He frequently attributed the striking effects that followed the expression of his will, not to himself, but to the faith of those on whom these effects were wrought. He assured his friends that they could do the same things, and even greater, if they only had faith in the smallest degree. In fine, the exercise of this singular power by Jesus, is uniformly marked by the promptitude, the ease, and the spontaneity, which mark all natural action.

All this looks to me exactly like the action of natural genius. The possessor of genius does what his genius inspires him with the faith that he can do, with so much ease, it comes so naturally to him to do it, that the wonder to him is, not that he does it,—for how can he help doing it?—but that everybody else cannot do likewise. As far as his own consciousness gives

him any insight into the secret of his power, he does what he does, because he has faith that he can do it. This is as far as he knows; and so faith naturally seems to him to be all that is necessary.

I BELIEVE then that the wonder-working power in Jesus was a natural gift, like the genius of Shakspeare, or the extraordinary faculty of arithmetical calculation occasionally manifested in individuals.

I hold also, and as an inevitable consequence, that this great gift was subject to the same laws which are illustrated in the action of all other natural powers.

As for example. Before any power can be exerted by man, he must be conscious of that power, through the faith which it inspires. He must believe that he can do what he proposes, before he can do it. The power of Jesus was exercised on this condition.

And then again, the vigor of any natural power that a man possesses, depends upon its being used in a natural way, rightly. The law

which Jesus himself stated, when he declared that to him who hath will be given and he will have abundantly, while from him that hath not will be taken away even that he hath, applies to the gift of Jesus equally with all natural talents. It might have been abused; in which case it would have lost vigor, it would have deceased. Has not this been the sad end, over and over again, of the rarest gifts of genius? Happy is it for mankind that they can never know how much they have lost in this way! A child comes into the world singularly endowed. It very early shows signs of its extraordinary endowment. The things, which it is thus empowered to do, it does at first with ease and simplicity; never dreaming that it is doing anything wonderful, because, when we first come into life, there is no one thing more wonderful to us than another. The child, however, excites the admiration of its parents and others, who are not endowed in the same way, or to the same degree. Their admiration is loudly proclaimed. The child soon perceives the sensation he is making; he finds he can do what others cannot, that he is distinguished. His

self-importance is impressed upon him. His vanity awakes. He discovers the delight of power. He perceives that he can make gain, in various ways, of his peculiar talent. Selfish interests take possession of him.

See now how inevitable it is that his peculiar power should languish and decay, when some selfish purpose gets possession of him. To the exercise of his power, a precedent faith in it is indispensable. We succeed in doing things that we have never done before, only through a conviction that comes to us that we are able to do them. Now this indispensable preliminary, faith, is impaired, and in the end entirely lost, when the mind comes to be engrossed and ruled by things not within the legitimate and natural sphere of our power. The attention of the possessor of genius being diverted from the simple, natural exercise of his genius, the passion for display or selfish profit having his heart, he cannot retain command of his genius, because the faith in it, which is essential to its exercise, is displaced, and becoming more and more difficult through the distraction caused by

selfish aims. What treasures of power have been lost in this manner!

Now I say that the peculiar power possessed by the Man of Nazareth, being a natural endowment, was liable to be impaired and lost in the same way. At the beginning of his public career he was tempted, as we read, to put it to a selfish use. Had he yielded to the temptation, his power would have gone from him; because a mind, inflamed by false aims, and diverted from the sphere of its healthy activity by selfish interests, loses of necessity that single faith in its own power which is essential to its exercise. But he did not yield to the temptation to consult his private advantage; and, consequently, he did not suffer any loss of power. He kept it in all its freshness and vigor. He never abused it, and it was never exhausted. His simple, natural, unconscious faith in it was never lost in the feverish excitement and bewildering anxieties of any personal end. It was the healthy, unconscious faith of a child. Had it been otherwise with him, this extraordinary power would have been taken from him; but by no arbitrary interposition of

Heaven. It would have gone from him, just as all genius goes from its possessors, when, giving their faith and service to wrong aims, they lose faith in themselves, and can no longer work the miracles with which they once delighted and blest mankind.

That the peculiar power exercised by Jesus was a natural gift, which he was born with, appears from this, that, instantaneous and astonishing as were its effects, yet, when it was exercised upon living human beings, its action was invariably in harmonious relation to other natural powers. It paid respect to the inner laws of our nature, and wrought in concert with them, and its effects were realized through their co-operation.

When he healed diseases, he addressed himself to the minds of the diseased. When he restored the withered hand, he did not exercise his power upon the suffering limb, but he commanded the man to stretch out his hand. And what a startling impression he must have made

upon the mind of this man becomes evident upon a consideration of the circumstances as they are stated, or may be fairly inferred from the Records. When I depict to myself the scene of this particular miracle, I find anything easier than to doubt its reality. Just look into that crowded synagogue, or Jewish church. Behold that young man there upon whom all eyes are fastened with breathless interest. See the little knot of the elders of the church, looking at him askance, with aversion and dread, watching for some opportunity to put him down. In the midst of this excited assembly, a man with a withered hand, a private individual, all unused to be an object for the public gaze, is commanded by the strange young man from Nazareth to stand forth before all present. There he stands, trembling with wonder and awe and vague expectation; not knowing what was to be done to him, except that his hand was to be restored he knows not how. A pindrop silence pervades the place. Then Jesus turns to those elders, men eminent for their piety, so zealous for the sanctity of the Sabbath, that they considered it profaned by an office of hu-

manity, and now ready to denounce him as a Sabbath-breaker if he dared to heal the man. Listen to the bold and searching appeal which he makes to these men who were longing to destroy him. "Is it lawful," he asks them, "to do well on the Sabbath day or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" As if he had said, "Which is breaking the Sabbath, you or I?" They make no reply, for there is no reply to be made. There these pious leaders of the people stood,—their spiritual pride in the dust,—silenced, confounded, cowering before the mingled glances of his indignation and pity! What a scene was there! It must have been awful, the humiliation of these saints before all the people. Deadly must have been the hate which Jesus excited. As no answer came to him, he turned to the man with a withered hand, and, in that thrilling tone of authority which suited the occasion, and which I cannot disconnect from my idea of him, he commanded the man to stretch out his hand. It was of course like an electric stroke, to be thus suddenly and authoritatively addressed by that extraordinary person and in that awestruck assembly. The man

stretched forth his hand instantly, before he knew what he was doing. The movement was, in a manner, instinctive.

And so it was always. Christ wrought upon the body through the mind. And he attached great importance to a certain state of the mind in the sufferer, *faith*, as instrumental to the cure. His will acted upon and stimulated the will of the diseased person; and this it did the more readily when the will of the person acted upon was already stimulated by confidence in the power of Christ. Again and again, where those whom he relieved were, through the liveliness of their faith, peculiarly sensitive to his influence, the effect was so immediate and decisive, so wholly unaccompanied by any conscious exercise of power on his part, that he attributed their cure to their own faith alone.

There are two modes of thought, two systems of philosophy, which divide the thinking world. According to one, the material takes prece-

dence of the immaterial; and the mind is regarded as nothing more than the result of the bodily organization, just as music results from the structure of a musical instrument. According to this, the material philosophy, "the brain secretes thought pretty much as the liver secretes bile," and the thinking power can have no separate existence after the visible mechanism of the body is broken up.

The other mode of thinking is directly the reverse of this. It is the spiritual or transcendental philosophy. It regards the mind, or immaterial thinking part of us, not as the result or property of the bodily organism, but as the creative source, the originating and informing life, the substance of the body. In conformity to this way of thinking, the immaterial precedes the material. It is through the vital energy of the spirit that the body is originally constructed and subsequently sustained.

I hold to the latter philosophy as by far the sounder and the better supported, and infinitely more inspiring of the two.

Accepting this way of thinking, I think I perceive how it was that Jesus wrought those

instantaneous cures, and how naturally, and in what harmony with natural laws they were wrought. He stimulated into sudden and unusual activity the minds of those on whom he produced these effects; and so, by an immediate development of that spiritual power which is the central spring of vitality, bodily diseases were thrown off and physical defects were repaired. That diseases have been suddenly cured in this way, by a sudden and powerful influence exerted by the mind, there is, as I have said, no question. In the case of Christ's cures, the vitalizing power of the sufferers, who applied to him, was excited into extraordinary activity, not by fear or hope, but by the deepest and by far the strongest sentiment of our nature, by the sentiment of veneration. How powerful that is, and how powerfully he appealed to it, we can never know till we appreciate the winning beauty, the commanding greatness of his life.

I HAVE said that Christ did not apply his singular power to the suffering body, but that he healed the body through the mind.

There are some things, however, stated in the Gospels, which appear to indicate the reverse. For instance, he *touched* the leper. Again and again he laid his hands upon the infirm. In the ninth chapter of John we have an account of a man born blind, whom Jesus restored to sight. We are told that, in this instance, "he *spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind with the clay*," and told the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam: and he went and washed, and came seeing. In another instance, they brought to him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. And Jesus took him aside from the crowd, and *put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue*, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is to say, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spake plain.[1] Once more, they brought a blind man to him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town; *and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him*, he asked him if he saw aught.

[1] Mark vii, 32–35.

And he looked up and said, I see men, as trees, walking. After that *he put his hands again upon his eyes*, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.[1]

These instances seem to contradict the assertion that Jesus did not apply his power to the diseased limbs or organs of those whom he relieved. But the contradiction is only apparent. In the case of the leper, it is not at all necessary to suppose that the *touch* of Christ had any miraculous efficacy. It was a natural, instinctive movement on the part of Jesus, fitted and possibly intended to give increased animation to the sufferer's faith; which it did, by expressing the perfect confidence of Jesus, by showing that he had no fear of contracting that frightful disease.

In the case of the deaf and the blind, it must be borne in mind that the communication between him and them was broken, or at least very much impaired. It was necessary that it should be restored. Accordingly he used the simple means mentioned in the cases referred

[1] Mark viii, 24.

to above, not because there was any miraculous virtue in them, but only to express his will to the minds of those sufferers. The deaf could not be impressed by the authority of his voice. The blind knew not the power of his eye. Therefore he made a palpable application to the eyes of the blind, using the simplest means at hand. And he put his fingers into the ears of the deaf man; and, as he had an impediment in his speech also, he touched his tongue likewise. These things I understand him to have done solely to communicate his purpose to the sufferer. They discharged the office of words. His "*looking up to heaven*" in this latter case, and his "*sighing*,"—were they not the means which he took to convey his meaning to the man, and to encourage him to make the needed effort to speak? Was the *sighing* anything more than a long inhalation, which, accompanied by a raising of the eyes, imitated the exertion which the man was to make? It was by this pantomimic action that he signified to the man what he was to do. Only so could he make the deaf man and the stammerer understand what he wanted of him—what it all meant.

Thus regarded, these applications to the bodies or suffering organs of those on whom he exercised his power, offer no contradiction to my assertion that Jesus healed the body through the mind.

Taking the account which I have given of the peculiar power of Jesus as the true account, regarding it as a power that was naturally his, a gift of genius, are we not prepared to perceive in him a transcendent elevation of mind? How beautifully does a Godlike self-forgetfulness here open upon us! How far above all self-concern he was, is shown in his manner of using his great gift.

Not his possession of this power, but his perfectly generous use of it, renders him great in my eyes. It is not for his rare gifts that I revere him, but for the pre-eminent superiority to those gifts, which his manner of employing them shows in him, and which could be shown in no other way so strikingly. His miracles (so called), being such as they are, teach me that he was far greater than they. Where shall I find words to describe the

grandeur and pure moral beauty that irradiate his character under this aspect of it?

Has there a man ever lived, before or since, who, like Jesus, never seems to have considered the possession of any peculiar power that he may have been endowed with, as an ample warrant for a corresponding self-valuation? When an individual finds himself possessed of a gift at all rare, and others deferring to him on that account as an extraordinary person, he naturally comes to see himself through the eyes of others, as one, to whose preservation and for whose honor ordinary men must sacrifice their interests, and it may be their lives. Observing everywhere the public sense entertained of his value, how can he help accounting himself justified by the possession of power in using it to aggrandize himself? Even though he may be far above all vulgar self-display, yet he can hardly escape a false idea of his own importance; especially when he finds himself surrounded by the stupid and the base, by men doggedly standing in the way of all good, or purposely misleading the world. How naturally does he interpret his conscious power as his express

commission authorizing him to disregard the rights and lives of inferior men, in order that one so important as himself may be preserved to the world. And besides all this, there is the natural delight taken in the mere exercise of power, which is always very seductive.

But consider how it was with the young Man of Nazareth. Only about thirty years of age, thus in the very bloom of life; endowed with keen sensibility and large sympathy, as the whole tenor of his utterances shows; of obscure birth, and so poor that he wandered about, not knowing in the morning where he should rest his head at night; actuated by pure and generous aims, perfectly conscious that he was prompted to the course of life that he pursued by no unworthy motive, but by the best,—thus situated, thus moved, he found himself possessed of a peculiar power, enabling him to produce instantaneously the most astonishing effects by a word of his lips, by a brief act of his will; a power, which, whenever he exercised it, caused the greatest sensation, and made him the wonder of the whole country.

And yet,—and here is the singular greatness

of this most original of characters,—youthful and susceptible as he was, although he had lived in retirement from his birth up to that age, not only does he evince no sensibility to the natural captivation of power, he is as wholly unmoved by the public excitement, of which he is the centre and the cause, as if he were all alone in the world. And never is he found using the peculiar gift which was native to him, as if it entitled him to any deference beyond what was due to his personal truth. Very clear and strong in that, he did indeed demand to be listened to with the respect which is the rightful claim of personal integrity. But he never makes the slightest parade of his power. He uniformly uses it for no purpose but to serve some impulse of common humanity, never to obtain anything for himself. Had he employed it for self-display, such a use of it would have argued that he himself thought it admirable. Whereas, never using it as if he thought there was anything specially wonderful in it, he gives us, like Nature herself, the idea of a reserved power, and he is always seen to be far greater than his works.

There is a delight, I say, in the mere exercise of power, especially to the young. But to this delight he shows himself insensible. Although he used his singular gift for the sake of the suffering, he did not eagerly seek opportunities of exercising it, even in this way. How easily might he have persuaded himself to use it more frequently, since it was but humane to relieve the suffering! But no such plausible suggestions had weight with him to betray him into excess, or to give his power undue prominence. There was evidently something that always interested him far more than relieving bodily sufferings. He was interested far more in ministering to the diseases of the mind than in healing the sick. And this too, although the latter was sure to make him popular and the former unpopular, even to the peril of his life. He was far more concerned to speak great truths than to work miracles. Accordingly he withdrew himself again and again from the great excitement which he caused. He sought to avoid exercising his gift. It is true, if we take the Gospels to the letter, we must infer that the number of his miracles was very great.

But we must allow for the exaggeration natural in such cases. If a physician works only two or three remarkable cures, rumor always multiplies them, and represents him as healing multitudes. In his history, the teachings of Jesus are more prominent than his miracles. His character as a wonder-worker is subordinate to his character as a teacher.

And when he did exercise his power, it was with the utmost directness. He took no pains to certify its reality, or to guard against misrepresentation. He went straight to his purpose. Before the bystanders were aware almost, the thing was done. He never magnified his works. He was annoyed because people were more impressed by his miracles than his teachings. "Except ye see signs and miracles," said he, upon one occasion, "ye will not believe." He virtually disclaimed, again and again, the credit of the cures which he wrought; telling those who were relieved, that it was their own faith that had healed them. He said of Jairus' little daughter, that she was not dead but only asleep.

And it is striking to observe that, in the

exercise of his power upon any one occasion, there was never any excess. He never wasted it. He used only so much power as was absolutely necessary.[1] In the case of the child just referred to, there was no needless display. He revived her, but he did not bring her back to full health instantly. He exerted no unusual power to do what did not require it. He barely revived her, and then, relying for her entire restoration upon ordinary means, directed those present to give her food. So also, when he called Lazarus out of the deep slumber, he bestowed upon him no superabundant strength. Lazarus awoke and arose at the call of his friend, but there was no miraculous power in

[1] "The spider and the bee, the ant and the beaver, are spendthrifts neither of time nor of toil; and in all the works of the Divine Artist around us,—in all the laws of matter and of motion,—in the frame of man, of animals, and of plants, *the economy of Power* is universally displayed. Nothing is made in vain,—nothing by a complex process which can be made by a simple one; and it has often been remarked by the most diligent students of the living world, that the infinite wisdom of the Creator is more strikingly displayed in the economy than in the manifestation of power."—*Sir David Brewster.*

his limbs to enable him to come forth with ease, "bound hand and foot" as he was "in grave-clothes," and with a cloth covering his face. At the vision of the dead man alive, and staggering in the thick folds of his shroud, the bystanders stood transfixed with amazement and dread. And Jesus recalled them to themselves by bidding them go to the assistance of Lazarus, and loosen the grave-clothes that he might walk freely. Indeed, so frugal was he of his power, that on one occasion, in the case of a blind man, he had to repeat the effort to restore him; as, after the first application of his power, the man's sight was only partially restored, and he could barely distinguish men from trees. In the account of the extraordinary multiplication of the loaves and fishes, one of the striking incidents of that event, creating a strong presumption of its truth, is the characteristic direction of Jesus: "Gather up the fragments, so that nothing be lost."[1]

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[1] Rammohun Roy, in the Preface to his "Precepts of Jesus," excuses himself for omitting the miracles, on the ground that the Hindoos, for whose instruction that work was prepared, would not be struck by them, as they were accus-

Like God, like Nature, is the unconsciousness of doing anything remarkable that characterizes Jesus, the wonder-worker. He produces those striking effects as if nothing in the world were more a matter of course. And although people came to him in such numbers, and so continually, that he had not time so much as to eat,[1] and although the crowd was at times so great that there was no getting into the house where he was,[2] and some were in danger of being crushed and trampled under foot,[3] still no heaving surges of public wonder could disturb the singleness of his purpose, or put him under the slightest constraint. He still extended his hand to heal the sick, he still spoke to relieve the suffering, with a manner as simple as if there were not an eye to behold what he was doing, nor a heart to beat with admiration and awe.

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tomed to much more extraordinary miracles in their own religion. A striking tribute to the homeliness and simplicity of the works of Jesus.

[1] Mark iii, 20; vi, 31. [2] Mark i, 33; ii, 4. [3] Luke xii, 1.

Indeed, dear as Truth was to Jesus, and wholly given as he was to its service, yet he did not avail himself of his power even to serve that dear cause. He did not employ it in that interest alone or primarily, if, indeed, ever. Could we discharge our minds of all long-cherished, preconceived opinions on this point, I think the main impression left upon our minds, by his history, would be, that his first and chief inducement to the exercise of his power uniformly was pure pity for the suffering that he witnessed. Just as any one would instinctively reach forth his hand to rescue a fellow-being in danger, so, just as naturally and with no ulterior aim, Christ extended his hand and exerted his will to heal and restore. I wish to say distinctly, that the working of miracles was wholly incidental with him to higher purposes, that they did not make a part of his plan, supposing that he had any plan. When he healed a sick person, it was not with one eye upon the object of his compassion, and the other upon the effect which the good work was

to have upon his own repute. Not double, but single was his aim, and it was humanity alone that moved him.

It has been so long taken for granted, as a point beyond all dispute, that the miracles, so called, were designed as the express credentials of the authority of Jesus, that it requires some effort to see them under the aspect in which I am endeavoring to present them; and which, I think, the Gospels authorize: as simple acts of humanity.

It is true Jesus is represented as referring to his works in attestation of the Divine favor. This is not denied. "The works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works." Again, Jesus is described, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, as "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him." It

is true an appeal was made to the works of Jesus, in attestation of his truth. And it is also true, that they do attest it.

But it by no means follows that it was his motive and express design, when he did those works, to prove his own authority. Any honest man may justly appeal, as Jesus did, to his character; to the good which he has done, or endeavored to do, when maligned, as Jesus was. But such an appeal does not, by any means, render it necessary to suppose that his motive in doing good was to prove his own benevolence or honesty.

On the contrary, the worth of a man's good deeds, as testimonials to his truth, depends entirely upon his being actuated by no reference to the effect which they are to have upon his reputation. When one performs a good act, not with a single eye to it, but with a view to the influence it will give him with others, does it not instantly lose its worth as a good deed? It certainly shows him to be, not self-forgetting but directly the reverse, self-interested when he professed to be disinterested. He cannot refer to it as evidence of the pure benevolence of his

motive, for it is not. But when he discharges kind offices for others without the slightest thought of any credit it is to reflect upon himself, then, when his motives are impugned, he may, without exposure to the charge of vainglory, appeal to what he has done, in attestation of his innocence.

To apply these remarks to Jesus. It was natural and just that he should refer those, who charged him with corrupt designs, to his deeds, and let them speak for him. He was accused of sinister designs. He demanded to be believed. Very naturally he appealed to what he was doing. 'If you will not believe what I say, consider what I do. I refer you to my actions. Are they the actions of a true man or a false?'

Such, I conceive, was the purport of his appeal to his works; which, be it fully considered, could not have had the slightest worth, as vouchers for the purity of his aims, unless they were what they professed to be, single-hearted works of humanity. It was as works of pure mercy that they showed themselves to be 'the works of the Father,' accrediting him by whom they were wrought. They were not Divine

works if the principal intent, with which they were done, was, not to relieve those in whose behalf they were wrought, but merely to display extraordinary power. God never does anything in Nature merely to show his power; although it is very common to hear people speak as if He did, as if He had arranged all the planets and stars, and constructed every plant and every animal for the sake of proving that He exists to the satisfaction of man, as if the Almighty were anxious on that point. The pride of the little creature!

Do not the foregoing very simple considerations render it clear that the reference of Jesus to his works, in self-vindication, is not at variance, but in entire harmony with the character of those works as I have described them?

I WISH to make it appear, for I believe the New Testament history authorizes it, that, in doing the extraordinary things attributed to him, Jesus had no aim beyond doing what was right and humane at the time. And it is on

this very account, because his eye was thus single, beaming only with sympathy, that his works show themselves to be divine. We lose all thought of them as mere displays of power, even as he himself made no account of them in this respect. It was not for the sake of showing his power, even for the plausible purpose of convincing the people of the truth of his teachings, that he performed these works. When the sick and the lame and the blind were brought to him, he was "*moved by compassion.*" It was from this sacred dictate of Nature that he relieved them. This was his ruling motive, —all that he thought of at the moment. It did not occur to him, or, when it did occur to him, it had no influence to distract his purpose, that these beneficent acts would redound to his credit. This is what I mean when I say that, in doing these works of mercy, he had no ulterior aim.

This idea, I think, is very strongly sustained by the very careless manner — careless as to effect—in which he wrought these cures. Had he designed them as evidences, the most ordinary wisdom would have required that he

should put them in the most convincing form, and always in the clearest light. When he intended, for instance, to raise Lazarus, he should have announced his intention beforehand, and invited the presence of the unbelieving. Whereas, it was purely accidental, apparently, that any were present except his friends. He should, at least, have seen to it that every avenue to suspicion was closed. Instead of proving his power to restore the dead to life upon an intimate friend, he should have selected a stranger, between whom and himself there could be no suspicion of collusion. He should not have wrought so many miracles in private. He should have taken ordinary pains, at least, to guard against mistake or misrepresentation. Whereas, in fact, he was as indifferent to misconstruction as Nature herself. In the case of the daughter of Jairus, first saying that she was not dead,[1] he sent every one from the room but her parents and one or two of his

[1] While our Common Version is generally marked by a simplicity akin to that of the Original, it is sometimes a little too rude,—ruder even than the Original. When Jesus told

own friends. Once and again he took infirm persons aside and healed them in private, merely because, I suppose, silence and quiet were, in their cases, necessary to their effectual and immediate cure. He never shows the slightest anxiety to make his agency prominent. Indeed, throughout, in the whole history of this singular natural gift, there is no quality of the finest natural action wanting. Grant that he possessed this power, and all the rest is exactly as it should be, in order to be in keeping with his lofty character. All moves and breathes and has its being in the style of Nature.

While in the exercise of this great power the manner of Jesus illustrates the simplicity of Nature and a perfect singleness of mind, it is at

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the professional mourners (corresponding to mutes at modern funerals), collected at the house of Jairus, that the child was not dead but only asleep, it is said, in our Version, that they "*laughed him to scorn*,"—rather a strong demonstration for such a cause, and upon such an occasion. The meaning simply is, in modern phrase, they treated his declaration with derision.

the same time marked by an impressive air of authority, by the dignity as of a born king. Never is his tone more commanding, never more expressive of the consciousness of power, than when he is giving utterance to his potent will. "I will. Be thou clean." "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" "Stretch forth thine hand!" "Lazarus! come forth!" And his manner was thus dignified because, in doing these things, he was doing what was perfectly natural to him. He was evidently born to the power which he thus wielded. And it is proved to be his by its being thus easy in him. How could a fictitious power ever have been represented as harmonizing so gracefully to the very life with his great mind?

As conscious of his power as of his existence, he was no more solicitous about the one's being acknowledged than about the other's. And here, I apprehend, is another reason why the exercise of his power was so unstudied. The only desire he expressed, so far as others were concerned, was, in repeated instances, that nothing should be said of it,—that those whom he cured should tell no man. He saw what a

sensation was created. Instead of taking advantage of it, he did what he could to allay it, by withdrawing from public notice, and by charging those whom he relieved to say nothing about what he had done for them.

It strikes me also as a very original quality in him that, young as he was, and conscious as he must have been of an unwonted personal force, it seems never to have occurred to him to rely upon anything else than the unmixed power of Truth. Most manifest is it that that was, in his eyes, immeasurably the greatest power in the universe of things. So entire was his reliance on that and that alone, that even the unprincipled and ferocious opposition which was made to him never suggested to him the idea of securing, by his great personal power, such an ascendency over the people as would have rendered all opposition to him unavailing. He is not greater for what he did than for what he forbore to do.

What I say is this, that not only was he in-

sensible to every temptation to use his power in order to increase his personal influence, but he was thus insensible under the most trying circumstances, in a position that would seem to have justified him in using whatever means were within his reach to fortify himself and his influence. He never dishonored Truth by dividing his confidence between her and any other power. He loved the Highest with a whole and undivided heart. He never infringed upon the tribunal of reason and conscience to which he uniformly addressed himself. His constant use of the interrogative form of expression shows how ever-present to his mind was that high tribunal.

I do not challenge admiration for him because he never sought with all his great power to inflict injury upon those who persecuted him. But the wonder is, that, confronted as he was by powerful and merciless foes, he was still as serene and as unmoved by them, as if he neither had an enemy on earth, nor any unusual means of resisting hostility. To use his great gift, save for some blessed office of mercy, appears never to have been thought of by him.

How clear his vision, how pure his aim, never to have been deluded into thinking that, as he had the good of men so much at heart, he would be justified in using all the means in his reach to strengthen himself, and that those who so wickedly withstood his generous labors, deserved no consideration at his hands! That most plausible of errors, the error to which the strongest and the wisest have so often yielded, namely, that the end justifies the means, derives not the slightest authority from him.

Where does unconsciousness of self show so beautifully as in those who, in forgetting themselves, forget all the abundant means of self-advancement which their own richly-endowed but self-forgotten natures offer? Surely it is through such natures that Love manifests itself as all divine.

The popular idea of Jesus as a being possessed of supreme divinity, or of a pre-existent,

super-angelic nature, has the effect, as it is often remarked, to destroy the influence of his personal character. When his nature is declared to differ thus essentially from ours, we lose all means of estimating his strength.

But no objection of this kind lies against the representation here given, according to which, the difference between Jesus and other men is, not a difference of nature, but a difference of gifts. He was a human being, greatly endowed. So far from being removed beyond the reach of our sympathy on this account, he is brought very near to us through the generosity and greatness of soul, which he shows in the use of his uncommon power, far nearer than if he had no such means of manifesting that generous spirit which the humblest can appreciate and be inspired by. It is small men, men of few or no gifts, who are cut off from us through their want of power to reach and hold our hearts. But great men, really great men, so far from standing aloof from us, are brought down into our inmost souls by their greatness, because it enables them to enter into our very being by inspiring us with new sentiments of

reverence and love. The richly-endowed, when they are faithful to their great power, are the dearest friends of us all, of the lowest as well as of the highest. Jesus of Nazareth is proved to sustain no ordinary relation to mankind by the fact that he possessed native powers, which he so used as to create in all hearts the profoundest veneration. Under God, he is the nearest relative of us all, our next of kin in the spirit, a far closer relationship than that of flesh and blood. He is bound to us by the affection he inspires, by which he draws us nearer to Truth and Goodness, and which belongs to the sacred essence and soul of our being.

Is not Jesus Christ, then, a far greater blessing to me than any gift of genius could have been? I would rather have the vision of his Godlike Beauty and all that it discloses, than his power of working miracles. If my friend has rare genius and is true to it, then he enriches me and all men, and the least I can do in return is to make him welcome to it. His

generosity is his title to his wealth, which I am only too happy to attest. He himself is a richer gift to every man, than any or all of his natural endowments are to him, or could be to any one. The love which he creates in us, is a thousand fold more to us than the possession of a genius even greater than his.

Although Jesus was indifferent to his power in relation to himself, yet in relation to God, it inspired him with a profound sense of the Highest within him. In the consciousness of singular power, he was singularly conscious of God. In his inmost personality he recognized the Eternal Divinity. Hence, while he said, 'I am nothing,' he said also, 'I am the Truth,' 'I am the Light.' We behold the Highest only dimly and afar off, in the external frame of Nature. He discerned Him in his own conscious being. He could not separate the two. "I and my Father are one."

It has often been said, and by those who have been disposed to question nearly all the particulars of the New Testament History, that, on the whole, the character of Christ is too great to have been fabricated; that, were it fictitious, the existence of such a fiction would be even more difficult to be accounted for than the actual existence of such a character.

Now I maintain that there is no respect, in which the character of Christ is more decisively elevated beyond the possibility of being a fabrication than in the simple natural greatness of mind and manner that characterizes him in the exercise of the extraordinary power which he is recorded to have possessed. The conception, in that or in any age, of the greatness thus manifested, if it had no reality, would have been a greater wonder than any recorded in the New Testament.

That some things are related of Jesus and represented as extraordinary, which are either

pure inventions or common occurrences exaggerated, does not by any means cast any doubt on the general truth of the history. On the contrary, it is a proof that the main events of his Life must have been of no ordinary character. Exaggerations and false rumors always arise from the occurrence of unusual events. Where there is smoke there is fire. The story of the transfiguration of the person of Jesus on a certain occasion, which grew, as I believe, out of a dream of Peter's, presupposes the truth of what precedes it and the extraordinary character of the events which excited the mind of Peter and occasioned the dream.

It is related in the seventeenth chapter of Matthew that, in order to pay a tax or tribute that was required, Jesus bade Peter go to the sea (the Sea of Galilee) and cast in a hook, and take the fish that first came up, and to open its mouth, where he would find a piece of money, with which he was to pay the tribute. This is one of the passages which are either purely fabulous or exaggerations of ordinary events. It does not sound like Jesus. It is a petty and needless display of power. It has the air of a

childish invention. Besides, it is not difficult to see how this story may have arisen. Had Jesus merely directed Peter to pay the tribute by catching some fish to be sold for that purpose, and had Peter, obeying the direction, chanced to be so fortunate as to catch almost immediately a fish valuable enough to furnish the amount of money required, how natural is it that the account of the incident should have grown into its present shape. How stories grow we all know from every day's experience. There is a very satisfactory instance of it in the account, or rather in one particular of the account, of the woman who came behind Jesus, and was cured of a chronic disease by touching his clothes. The fact that the woman was cured, and instantly, I see no reason for questioning, but decisive reasons for believing. It is not to the main fact that I now refer, but to the mention which is made of virtue's going out of Jesus. This is a fabulous addition to the narrative as, I think, very plainly appears. Matthew's account of this woman, which I consider to be nearest the truth, says nothing about *virtue*. He merely states that Jesus turned

round and asked who touched him, and the woman came forward and confessed that it was she. I suppose the woman, who must have been all in a tremor of excitement, did not merely touch his garments, but twitched them convulsively, clutching for life. Jesus, feeling something peculiar, and probably, from previous experience, surmising the truth, thus discovered that he had been touched. But it was very naturally inferred by the bystanders that he discovered that some one had touched him by the passing away of the miraculous power from his person. Accordingly, in Mark's account, this inference is stated; and it is said in so many words that Jesus asked who had touched him, "because he perceived that virtue had gone out of him." This inference being once stated, it was a very natural step to represent Jesus as saying, in so many words, that he felt the virtue go out of him. So it is related by Luke, who states that Jesus actually said, "I perceive that virtue has gone out of me." He could have said no such thing, as it is apparent that the reason why he wished to know who touched him was, that he might correct

the impression that the person who had touched him was under, namely, that there was a medical virtue in his very garments, and that he might direct the person healed to the true cause of the cure. "*Thy faith* hath healed thee," was his language to the woman. Thus we have an instance of the way in which a story may grow.

Another incident, which it is not easy to receive as true, is *the walking on the water*. No reason or motive therefor appears. It has an air of display unlike him. At the same time it is so connected with a characteristic act of Peter's, that, while I cannot clearly discern the truth of the fact, I cannot reject it.

Again. Fabulous as the story of the evil spirits' entering the herd of swine appears, and although no satisfactory explanation of it can be given, yet some of the particulars which it states, are strikingly probable from their naturalness. To repeat very briefly here what I have stated more at length elsewhere:[1] the power which Jesus exercised over the maniac

[1] *Jesus and his Biographers.*

was exerted *gradually*. The man was not completely restored at the first bidding of Jesus. He still talked insanely. There is a resemblance in this respect between this case and that of the blind man to whom Jesus twice applied his power. Again, that such a form of insanity, caused by the popular belief in demoniacal possession, should have existed, is very natural. This individual, it may be conjectured, being of a nervous temperament, had had his imagination excited by the fear that he might become the victim of evil spirits. The dread so preyed upon him, that, losing mental control, he had come to believe that the possession of himself had passed into other and evil hands. That he fancied that a whole legion of spirits were in him, shows how strong his faith was that he was possessed. Once more. The proposition to send the spirits into the swine was the suggestion of the insane man, and it shows the cunning of insanity. He fancied, doubtless, that he was speaking admirably in character, when, speaking in their name and according to their supposed unclean propensities, he asked to be sent into the swine, those

unclean animals. At the same time, he desired to have ocular proof of the departure of the spirits. And thus it would appear that the man could be restored to his wits only by a compliance with his request; so hypochondriacs have been cured only by being humored. Although these suggestions point to some basis of fact in this passage of the history, yet it is very difficult, and I cannot speak with any confidence as to the degree of truth which it contains.

There may be one or two other accounts of miracles, more or less fabulous. The story of the Nativity I have considered at length in the work already referred to.

THOUGHTS

II

I WONDER that so much importance has been given to the inquiry, whether the Four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Even were this point settled, and in the most satisfactory manner, still the truth of these histories could be determined only by a careful examination of the works themselves. It would still remain true that they have been exposed from the very earliest period to various causes of corruption; and it would be very possible, and indeed not at all unlikely, that they had suffered from interpolations, and that the original text had undergone various changes, especially during the centuries before the inven-

tion of the Art of Printing, when they were multiplied by transcription. They may have suffered more or less from all those liabilities to error which Theodore Parker enumerates,[1] and from which he draws the conclusion, illogically, as I think, that there is no reliance to be placed upon their historical truth.[2]

Granting, in the language of Mr. Parker, that there must be "limitations to the accuracy" of these Records, inasmuch as they are human works, (and what writings are there that are not thus limited in accuracy, being human?) that they "omit many things that Jesus said and did," (what history was ever written with no omissions?) that "the national, sectarian, and personal prejudices of the writers must color their narratives," (what historian has ever yet written by the pure white light of truth?)—granting all this and more, still these writings

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[1] *A Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion*, pp. 230–231. Fourth Edition, 1856.

[2] By the same mode of reasoning, the value of all historical writings is destroyed, for they are all exposed to the very same liabilities to error, and Theodore Parker himself is doomed to become a myth.

may contain truth, historical, circumstantial, as well as moral. And it is possible, from an examination of them, if not to determine with precision the amount of truth which they contain, yet to approximate it very nearly. Because Error may have had a share in their composition, or may have corrupted them with its glosses after they were written, it surely is not a sound conclusion that they contain nothing but fables. Even granting that there is very little of truth in them in comparison with the amount of fiction which they contain, still, although the quantity may be small, the quality —the subject of these writings being considered —may suffice to compensate us bountifully for any pains we may take to discover it.

I repeat my conviction that it is possible, by a careful sifting of the contents of these books, and by a critical analysis of their style and structure, to ascertain with a very close approach to exactness wherein they are true and wherein fabulous. In physical science, we have advanced so far as to be able to determine with exquisite accuracy, the exact proportions of the different substances which constitute any mate-

rial compound. I believe there is a like possibility of discovering the proportion of historical truth, be it more or less, in these Four Histories of Christ. On the very face of them, they are of such a character, so abundant in detail, as to render the success of the proposed examination very certain. And my friend Theodore Parker, with the strong reliance upon man's native sense of truth of which he is constantly giving us such abundant evidence, should be among the very last to doubt it.

To the success of such an analysis as I propose, there is no theory respecting the origin and primitive fortunes of the Four Gospels that is of the slightest importance. It may be that they were not written by the persons whose names they bear; or, if written by them, that they were originally very different in form and size from what they are now. Conceding all this, I affirm that these books may be substantially true nevertheless. To what extent they are true is a question that may be answered.

But I hasten to illustrate this position. Mr. Parker asserts, that "the gospel ascribed to John is of small historical value." Now, by the same process by which he decides that this gospel is not a history but a collection of myths, an argument, or, I know not what,— by a similar method, I discern in this book, and in the most important portions of it, signs of reality of the most decisive character. That the thirteenth chapter of this gospel is a narrative of actual incidents, I could not be better satisfied, had I been present in person. It is inlaid throughout with those marks of truth which are discernible by a far more trustworthy sense than the eye, and which, when they are found in such numbers, create an irresistible conviction of reality. Mr. Parker will say John never wrote it. Very well. *Aut Johannes aut Deus.* I contend not for names. It is enough that I have here a narrative of incidents which must have impressed themselves on the mind of some one present with the utmost force and vividness, for here they are in the narrative, reproduced with the precision of a die, with the delicacy of an ancient gem.

1. In the first place, the act of washing his disciples' feet,—how naturally was it suggested to the mind of Jesus! If there were any one thing which he had most earnestly sought to impress upon their minds, it was that they should renounce their ambitious hopes and their mutual jealousies. He had aimed to inspire them with fraternal confidence one toward another. On a former occasion, when a dispute arose among them which should hold the highest position in the magnificent empire which they were passionately expecting him to establish, he beckoned a little child to him, and, placing him before them, told them that so far from being great in the Divine kingdom they could not so much as enter it, unless they became as free from all selfish ambition and as docile as that little child. But notwithstanding this lesson and others to the same purport, here at the last, when he was to be with them only a very little while longer, and when he would have no more opportunities of instructing them,—here they were, again quarrelling which should be the first! We are told in one of the other gospels that at the last supper the disci-

ples disputed which should be the greatest. It is allowable to surmise that the dispute occurred just when they took their places at the table, and that there was a struggle for precedence. This conjecture is not at random. It is suggested, if not directly authorized, by the mode which Jesus took to rebuke them. That they struggled for places is intimated by the fact that he sought to correct them by performing for them the humblest office of such an occasion. It was characteristic of him thus to adapt himself to the circumstances of the moment. Observing their rivalry, which showed how little they had been impressed by his teachings, he seems to have determined to give them a lesson they would never forget. So, selecting a suitable moment, he silently rose and took a basin of water, and knelt down, and began to wash their feet. It was as if he said: "Ye are all aspiring to be masters. I will be your servant. Ye are ambitious of the chief places at the table. I, whom you call master, perform for you the most menial office of hospitality." The lesson, which he thus gave them, and the form in which he gave it,—could anything be more like him?

2. The particularity, with which his preliminary preparations are mentioned, is finely accordant with the circumstances. His disciples, not having the slightest idea what he was going to do, naturally followed and noted every movement. Observe how everything he did is specified. With every new movement the mystery grew, and their curiosity grew also. First, it is related, he *rose from supper,—then laid aside his garments,—then took a towel,—then girded himself,—then poured water into a basin,—and then*, &c.

3. A delicate trait of Nature, revealing the sentiments with which he was regarded by his humble friends, is perceived in their silent submission to the discharge of this menial office by their master. How undesignedly is the profound personal reverence, with which he had inspired them, thus expressed! They did not dare to question anything that he did. Do we not catch sight of the looks of wonder and perplexity which they exchanged? The utmost they could imagine was, that he had some purpose which they could not penetrate. But what could it be? All were struck dumb but

Peter. And even his amazement finds no utterance until Jesus approaches him; and then he is unable to repress his emotion.

4. Very characteristic both of Jesus and of Peter, is the brief conversation that takes place between them. Every word is in most admirable keeping with the occasion and with the character of each. "*Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet!*" We do not need to be told that it was Peter who uttered these words. His Galilean accent could not have been more marked. This exclamation, accompanied, as I always imagine, with a corresponding movement of his feet, withdrawing them out of the reach of Jesus,—how naturally does it burst from the lips of one who, on a previous occasion, when Jesus was telling his disciples of the fearful fate that awaited him, exclaimed, "Be it far from thee, Lord! This shall not be done unto thee!" Equally characteristic is the reply of Jesus, "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*" Characteristic in this, that it is in conformity with that habit of his mind that rendered everything that was said or done in his presence suggestive of some spiritual truth. So

full was he of spirituality, that at the slightest touch his mind overflowed with it. Not a movement could take place before him, not a lily wave, not a sparrow fall, without giving him a spiritual hint. Not a sound could be heard, that was not articulate with a meaning that escaped the outward sense. Thus the mention of *washing* suggested the thought of the inward cleansing which every one needed, who was to take part with him in his great work. And it is as if he said: 'What! will you not let me wash you? If I do not wash you, wash you through and through, you can be no friend of mine.' How perfectly in character, too, is the instantaneous revulsion in Peter's mind! How exactly like the person he appears to have been, the exclamation, "*Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!*"[1] Failing to catch the spiritual import of the words of Jesus, he is nevertheless subdued at once, and made pliant to his Master's will by the intimation that his friendship with

[1] 'Not only my feet to run for thee, but my hands to work for thee, and my head to think only of thee!'

him was in question. His feet are no longer withheld. He offers his hands and his head to the welcome office which is to pledge his devotion to Jesus.

5. Observe how consistent with the very delicacy of nature, and with the magnanimous character of Jesus in particular, are the reluctant allusions which he makes to the approaching treachery of one of his friends. The first allusion is very slight. It was suggested by his talk with Peter about washing. When the impulsive disciple offers his hands and his head to be washed, Jesus, brought back to the literal sense of the words, but still postponing an explanation of what he was doing till the fit moment, remarks, by way of excusing himself from washing Peter's hands and head, that one who is clean needs to wash only his feet. The feet, exposed as they were by the sandals then worn, often required to be washed when the rest of the person did not. "And ye are clean," he adds, "*but not all.*" The allusion here to the false disciple is very distant. Shortly afterwards, having finished washing their feet and explained his purpose in the act,

he refers, but more pointedly, to the fact that there was a traitor among them. "*I speak not of you all*," he says, "*I know those whom I have chosen. The language of the Scripture is verified. He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me!*" It evidently wounded him very deeply that a personal friend, one who had eaten bread with him, should prove false. How manifest his reluctance to state the fact in so many words! Twice he approaches it, but only allusively; the second time, however, more distinctly than the first. Evident is it also, that not a breath of personal ill-will stirs him to disclose his knowledge of the meditated treachery. The care he takes to avoid naming the traitor shows this. He says in so many words, that he tells them before it comes to pass, that one of them was about to be false to him, that, when it shall have happened, they may continue to believe in him; for they would then perceive that he had been fully prepared for all that was to take place. Having alluded twice to the painful fact, in obscure terms, at last, under the necessity of speaking plainly, he becomes agitated, "*troubled in spirit*," and with

much emotion, he declares outright, that one or them was about to deliver him up to his enemies.

His knowledge, by the way, of the treacherous design of Judas, it is not necessary to suppose, was obtained in any extraordinary manner. Much is omitted in the narrative. If we knew all, we should probably see how easy it was for Jesus, with his rare knowledge of men, to penetrate the designs of Judas, and how naturally too he might be acquainted with circumstances fitted to throw light on them, but not mentioned in the history.

But be this as it may, Jesus discloses his knowledge of the intended treachery with manifest sorrow; and he only tells so much as was necessary to preserve the faith of the rest of his friends unshaken.

[In Matthew's gospel we read, that when Jesus made the declaration that one of them would betray him, his disciples instantly began to ask, "Is it I?" How expressive of the deep personal reverence he had inspired was their self-distrust! So implicit was their confidence in him that, although eleven of them knew

perfectly well in their own hearts that they had no traitorous intent, yet they thought it more likely that they were going to commit this great crime than that he should accuse them without reason. He knew them, they knew, better than they knew themselves.]

6. Again. In entire consistency with the characters of all concerned, are the incidents that immediately follow upon his telling them that there was a traitor among them. As he did not answer their inquiries, Peter beckoned to John (who was so placed at the table that his head rested on the bosom of Jesus), to ask who it was of whom he spake. This question John asked in a whisper, and, as it appears that no one but John heard the answer of Jesus, Jesus must have answered in the same way. Aware that Peter and perhaps others were waiting and watching for his reply, fearing also that they might understand the motion of his lips, it not being his intention to name the traitor, Jesus avoids mentioning it, and bids John observe to whom, according, I suppose, to a customary form, he was about to hand the morsel, which he was then dipping into the dish. He

felt free to point out the traitor to John, his best loved and most intimate friend, but he evidently sought to avoid exciting any feeling against Judas.

7. What a touch of nature is shown in the remark: "*After the sop, Satan entered into Judas.*" The fear, the shame, the malignity, that were beginning to be aroused in the bosom of the traitor, must have shown their devilish expression in his features then. But, even if they did not, his whole appearance must have undergone an instantaneous change in the eyes of John. Then Satan first became visible in him.

8. True to nature is the remark made by Jesus to Judas: "*What thou doest, do quickly.*" While Judas remained there, the course of events must have seemed to Jesus to halt, and the suspense must have been intolerable.

9. It is remarkable and in accordance with the rare moral dignity of Jesus, that he descended to no expostulation with Judas. He knew, I think, that the wretched man had gone so far that if the generosity, (where shall we find its parallel?) with which he was then treat-

ing him, had no effect but to goad him on to the treachery which he meditated, there was nothing else that he could do, to save him from the crime, that would be of any avail.

10. Nothing could well be more natural, under the circumstances, than that Judas should rise and quit the place just at the moment when he did. How could he remain an instant longer in that presence, when he was upon the brink, as he must have thought, of having his treachery laid bare! He had no appreciation of the magnanimity of Jesus. Who else but Jesus would have suffered the traitor to quit the place at that juncture, without one expostulatory or denunciatory word! Is it not natural to surmise that the fact of being charged with a traitorous design before he had committed any overt act, was caught at by Judas as a great wrong done to him, an injustice that warranted him at once in retaliating the imagined injury by *being* the traitor he was falsely called? He went out with a heart hot with kindling rage and revenge. As soon as he had left the room, the dread course of coming events must have seemed to Jesus no

longer to pause, but to resume its onward movement toward the great issue. And then, the heavy weight of suspense being lifted off,

11. How sublimely in character is the exclamation of Jesus, "*Now is the Son of Man glorified!*" &c. When Judas had retired, Jesus, unlike any other man, yet still like himself, and superior to all other mortal men, instead of pointing after the retreating traitor and saying that that was the man to whom he had just alluded, instantly forgot his false friend in the blaze of Divine glory that streamed from the event which was at hand, and which the departure of Judas to consummate his treachery must have brought very near. To all human seeming, that event, a violent and ignominious death, was the utter defeat of all the great purposes of Jesus, for it was to take place before he had fairly communicated any portion of his own spirit to a single human being, as the incidents of that very evening showed. To every other eye, supposing it to have been visible to others, that event was nothing but a horrid mingle of blood and shame. But to him, the blackness and the agony were lost in the god-

like glory of a martyrdom more triumphant than a thousand victories. With a clearness of prophetic insight unparalleled in the history of mankind, he penetrated through the thick infamy of the Cross and beheld the serene glory of the Highest shining through. When Judas had gone from his presence, and might well be supposed to be busy in the execution of his base design, Jesus saw his own doom more clearly than before. And he not only saw it, he put upon it that sublime interpretation, to the truth of which all subsequent history has borne most impressive testimony. The death of Jesus on the Cross has touched the heart of the world, and changed that vile instrument of torture into a most sacred symbol. But, from a vision of the glory to be manifested in his death, and with a conviction that his hours were numbered,

12. With what natural human emotion does he turn to the little circle of his friends, now no longer darkened by the presence of a traitor, and with parental tenderness exclaim, "*Children! I shall be with you now only a little while longer.*" Not for any length of time could he

forget them, even in the contemplation of the unearthly glory that awaited him. From the divine aspect of his near death he turns to the human, and, at the thought of his now impending separation from them, his heart gushes over with new tenderness, and, as is so natural, he is made aware, as never before, how much he loved them. With this new and most touching experience of his own love, it seems to him that he had never commanded them to love one another before, and he says: "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*"

Thus have I endeavored to present some of those marks of Truth and Nature, which produce in my mind an irresistible conviction of reality. I see here real persons and real events, and persons and events of a character inexpressibly interesting. Let it be that we know not the author nor the date of the gospel ascribed to John. Say, too, that you find on its pages traces of error and fiction. I say also that you may discern here luminous signs of Truth. Although on every other part of this Record you

should insist that you find proofs of the fabulous, yet here, in this thirteenth chapter, I am brought face to face with Truth. Here is a piece of true narrative, full of nature, full to overflowing of beauty. But this is only a specimen of this Fourth Gospel. It abounds throughout in similar marks of truth.

Although the date and origin of these Records be lost in darkness, they themselves shine with the light of truth. The remains of tropical animals are found in Arctic regions. Whether or not you can tell how they came there, that they are the remains of such animals continues unquestionable.

[The twentieth verse of this chapter: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me," is, I apprehend, an accidental interpolation. It has no connection with what precedes or follows. Substantially, the same declaration occurs elsewhere.[1] It may have been written in the margin of some very early MS., opposite the place where it now stands. In making a copy from

[1] Matt. x, 40; Luke x, 16.

that MS., some ignorant transcriber may have taken it for an omitted passage, and written it in the body of his copy. This was one of the ways in which, during the centuries when the gospels were perpetuated by transcription, the original text was liable to suffer from mistaken interpolation.]

To the kind of evidence for the truth of the New Testament narratives, of which I have given a specimen in the foregoing section, and which may be gathered almost everywhere throughout the Four Gospels, and by which I am impressed with a vivid sense of reality, Theodore Parker shows not the slightest sensibility. I cannot find, in his "Discourse of Religion," that he attaches any weight to it. I am not aware that he recognizes its existence. Am I then carried away by mere fancies? Is there no force in such considerations as I am suggesting? Is it, as a Reviewer of one of my publications has asserted, that I am maintaining, what he calls, "a naturalism based upon

grounds so irrational and untenable that it is hardly to be conceived that a second advocate of it will ever be found?"[1]

It should be borne in mind that these marks of Truth and Nature, which I have pointed out, are not at all prominent in the narrative. I am not aware that they have been noted before in the light in which I have placed them. There is no attention called to them by the narrator. They are not enlarged upon. Nor is there the shadow of an appearance that the writer dreamed of furnishing evidence to the truth of his narration. Indeed, these signs of Truth which I have just specified, so far from being made conspicuous, are only intimated, not directly stated, but left to be inferred; very fairly inferred, but still they are only inferences. And the conclusion is, that nothing but Reality ever admits of inferences so unforced and so self-consistent.[2]

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[1] *N. A. Review*, vol. 71, p. 464.

[2] In order to see how these traits of Nature escape the acuteness of the most critical commentators, let De Wette,

The difference between the Fourth Gospel and the others is striking. A vast deal of labor and learning has been applied with very imperfect success, to the explanation of this difference. The idea which is given of Jesus in the last gospel differs from that which is presented in the other gospels, but I cannot perceive any inconsistency between the two.

It is explicitly stated in this Fourth Gospel, that its object is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.[1] It is evident also, from the peculiar

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for instance, on this very chapter, the thirteenth of John, be consulted. (*Exegetisches Handbuch zum N. T.*) Amidst the most elaborate minute criticism, only once is the internal truth of this passage alluded to, and that is, where it could not well be overlooked, in the exclamation of Peter: "*Not my feet only, but also, &c.*"—"a very characteristic trait," briefly observes the learned commentator. In consulting these most erudite exegetical works, I find them so ingeniously careful to avoid all allusion to the spirit of the Scriptures, that I am forcibly reminded of the cunning instinct with which the larvæ, deposited by certain flies in living animals and feeding on their bodies, take care to avoid the vital parts.

[1] Ch. xx, 31.

phraseology of the introduction, that the writer had certain contemporaneous opinions in view.

It appears also, from the whole tenor of the book, that it is the work of a mind remarkably spiritual, of just such a person as would have been intimate with Jesus. He was, spiritually, nearer to the great Teacher than any other of those who were about him. He entered more fully into his spirit,—understood him better.

Now supposing an account of Jesus and his teachings to have been written by a person of this character, a near personal friend of Jesus, and with the design stated, and with an eye to modes of thinking existing in his day, I think it would have proved to be just such a work as this gospel; more spiritual than the other gospels, and yet showing Christ under the coloring and shaping of the writer's peculiar character and design, and of the existing opinions in the midst of which he wrote.

While an intimate friend of Jesus, one who was peculiarly adapted to be on intimate terms with him on account of a partial similarity of nature, would seem to have been best qualified of all his friends to write his life, yet the fact

that he had a case to make out, a special design to fulfil,[1] and that he had his own ways of thinking, would, in a degree, disqualify him for the work. He would be apt to give us an idea of Jesus, shaped and colored by his purpose and by his own peculiar ways of thinking. He would aim to state, not precisely what Jesus said on various occasions, but what he would have said according to the writer's thought. The other Evangelists give us the words of Christ, and whether they themselves understood them, they give no sign. Whereas the author of the Fourth Gospel evidently gives us, in his own words, what he knew or believed to be the thoughts of Christ. In the third chapter of John, we have an account of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. But, in truth, there is very little said by either. From the thirteenth verse to the twenty-first, inclusive; and again, from the thirty-first to the thirty-sixth, inclusive, it is evidently not Christ, but the author of the Gospel, who is discoursing. The language used there is the language of the

[1] Ch. xx, 31.

First Epistle of John, not of Jesus. Again, in the thirty-ninth verse of the seventh chapter, we have one of the comments of the author of the Gospel, explanatory of the words of Jesus; a comment of doubtful correctness. In fine, in the Fourth Gospel we have Jesus as John conceived of him, looking at him with a special purpose and with reference to particular opinions.

At the same time, a very large portion of this gospel, like the other gospels, bears so visibly the stamp of Truth, that it seems, like a sheet directly from the Press, to be the imprint of Reality, transferred with mechanical exactness from the mind of the narrator to the page on which he wrote.

It is of the first importance to a just estimate of the Teachings of Christ, that what was peculiarly his should be carefully distinguished from what belonged to his country and his age. We are bound to make this distinction with the greatest care, certainly before we undertake to

criticise him. It has never yet been made with any precision. And mainly for this reason: because it seems never to have been sufficiently considered, that *certain modes of thinking give rise and currency to corresponding modes of speech, and that the forms of expression, thus rendered popular, come, in the course of time, to be employed by those who neither consider themselves, nor are considered by others, as holding the ideas or theories which those modes of speech, in their primary signification, express.*

For example, it was originally believed that the earth is stationary, and that the sun moves round it. This primitive belief gave rise to corresponding modes of speaking which represent the sun as rising and setting, and which continue in universal use now, long after it has been ascertained that it is not the sun that moves, but the earth. We all use these modes of speech, but no one infers from our use of them that we believe the sun actually to rise and set. We use these forms of language not for their logical signification, but merely to signify facts.

Centuries hence, when the English language

shall have become a dead language, and our literature shall have been swept into oblivion, and opinions and modes of thought now common, will be ascertained only very imperfectly and by laborious research, suppose then, should such a state of things ever be, that some learned critic should undertake the labor of deciphering and translating a solitary copy, or fragment of a copy, of some popular work of the present day, dug up from the ruins of a past world. Coming across such terms as 'diabolical,' 'fiendish,' if, after immense research, he should be able to determine their literal meaning, would it be a safe judgment if he should gather from them that his ancient unknown author, who possibly may have been a man believing in neither good spirits nor bad, recognized the existence of devils and fiends?

And yet it is precisely by such unauthorized inferences that Jesus has been represented as teaching things which were not his, but belonged to his age.

I do not consider it at all essential to the greatness of his character that it should be shown that he did not share in the popular opinions and beliefs of his age. It does not impair my idea of the largeness of his mind, to believe that, in regard to a variety of points, he was as much in sympathy with the popular mind as one could be, who was as much engrossed as he was with certain great thoughts beyond his time. I see no necessity for requiring that it should have been otherwise with him. But what I do consider as a great mistake, and as doing him the greatest injustice, is, *to infer from his use of popular forms of speech that it was his express design to teach what those forms of speech, literally interpreted, express.*

In the time of Christ, demoniacal agency had long been such a matter of universal belief, as the cause of almost every variety of bodily suffering, that it had created and established in popular use certain modes of speech, which

every one, who had to do with diseases, was under the necessity of using, as there were no other. They were employed and understood, not as declaratory of individual opinion in regard to the origin of disease, but simply to represent facts. Accordingly, as to the personal opinions of Jesus in relation to the causes of disease, we can infer nothing, one way or another, from his use of the established phraseology of his day.

Without the slightest personal disparagement, we may fairly presume that he had no opinions of any kind, affirmative or negative, as to the reality of demoniacal possession. It was not a matter, it is reasonable to suppose, upon which he thought at all; he was wholly occupied with much more important things. Nor did his use of the popular language of the time, in this respect, have the slightest influence upon the belief of others.

We have very little hesitation in designating as the offspring of ignorance and superstition the theory of disease which had established

itself in the popular mind in those days, and which attributed bodily and mental disorders to malignant spirits. And yet it is not wholly without foundation. We may see good reasons to reject the idea of personal spiritual existences taking possession of men and deranging mind and body. But that many diseases are caused and cured by a spiritual agency, in other words, through a mental influence or condition, admits of no question. The old Jewish superstition was, not so much a falsehood, as a distortion of the truth. Many an error is only a truth inverted. The ancient Jews, with a wise instinct, traced disease to the central vitality, the spirit, although they erred in imagining that they found there worse demons than themselves. The immaterial part of us has much to do with our physical derangements. Falsehood and sin, in the heart, wear and tear the delicate texture of the nerves, and trouble the currents of the blood.

It is through forgetfulness of the fact which I have stated respecting language, namely, that

words, in passing into popular use, often lose their original sense, that Jesus has been represented as designing to give the weight of his express personal authority to the popular ideas of the Kingdom of Heaven as a great political institution; so it was regarded by his countrymen.

My belief is that the idea of the Divine kingdom, in its outward and temporal character, had no living place in his mind, no vital relation to his thoughts. Under all the popular phraseology, which he used in speaking of it, I think it is evident that what took possession of his mind was the idea of a purely spiritual empire, the moral government of the Highest. In all his hints and descriptions of the Kingdom of Heaven, his aim may be perceived, to render some moral feature of it prominent.

THERE is one passage in his history, and a very memorable one, which, duly considered, forbids me to think that he participated in the popular notions of his day in regard to the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is that passage that relates how the mother of two of his disciples, full of the idea that he was about to establish a visible empire, came and asked him to promise the nearest places to his throne to her two sons. How promptly and clearly does it appear from his answer to this application, upon what ideas of glory and dominion his mind was fixed! How manifest is it that the authority which he was thinking of, was not an authority to be represented by any visible splendor, but to be obtained through suffering! "*Can you,*" is his instant question to the young men, "*can you drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*" In other words: "Can you drink of the cup of bitterness that I am to drink? Can you endure to be immersed in the flood of suffering which I am to pass through?" Thus incidentally, and all the more strikingly because incidentally, is it disclosed what ideas of power he cherished, and how they were associated, nay, identified, with suffering, and suffering such as he was to undergo for Righteousness' sake.

Little dreaming of his meaning, the two dis-

ciples, simple-minded men that they were, answer him in the affirmative, saying that they are able—able to do and to endure anything to secure the coveted honors. "Yes," he virtually replies, "it is true, you will drink of the same cup and pass through the same baptism of blood and fire. But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not in my gift. It will be given to such as shall be found qualified therefor in the providence of Heaven."

The other disciples were indignant at this attempt of the two brothers to get an advantage over the rest. And then it was that Jesus, perceiving their ambition, gives them, — gives them? gives the world!—that immortal definition of true greatness, the depth of whose meaning is yet to be fathomed, and of which his life is the only adequate illustration which the world has yet seen. Yes, and he puts it in the clearest light by contrasting it with the worldly idea of power. "The nations," he says, "have kings and lords, but it must not be so among you. *Whosoever among you would reign, let him serve. He among you that would be chief, let him be your servant.* Even as the Son of

Man came not to be served but to serve, to serve even to the surrender of his life, to serve not one, but many." With such a clear insight into the nature of true power, how could he have had any sympathy with the crude notions of greatness popular in his time? I shrink from the thought. It is as absurd as it is unworthy.

Of this whole passage in which Jesus defines greatness, I think it may be said without exaggeration, that, if it were the only saying of his that had come down to us, and, even if it had been unaccompanied by the splendid illustration of his personal example, it would have been recorded among the deathless sayings of the world's best wisdom. Truly, he was a world-teacher, and the world's wisest may sit at his feet, finding all their wisdom anticipated.

That it was by spiritual ideas of the kingdom that he was inspired, and that we are not to infer from his use of the popular language of his day, that he held the ideas which that lan-

guage appears to express, is evident from this, that, from the very first, he was impressed with the certainty of the violent death that awaited him.

The opinion has been intimated, and Mr. Parker concurs with it, that Jesus had a political aim.[1] But what renders it highly improbable that he should have sought any political success, is the fact, to which I now refer, and which is made apparent in a very striking way. The dark prospect of the fate that he was to suffer, appears never to have been long absent from his mind. If there be any language of his which seems to show, in the words of Mr. Parker, that "he had political plans that lie there, indistinctly seen through the mythic cloud which wraps the whole," I hold it, all the circumstances considered, a great deal more likely that his language has been erroneously reported, especially as the writers of the gospels actually had political expectations, rendering them very liable to misunderstand him, than that one, to whose mind

[1] *Discourse of Religion*, p. 238. Fourth Edition.

the idea of a speedy and violent end was constantly recurring, should be cherishing political plans.

It is striking to note the connection, in which the occasional allusions to his death that he uttered, are introduced. The coincidence is curious. He is always found foretelling his own death precisely at those junctures, when, if he had had any political purposes at all, or at any time, those purposes would have been betrayed. As soon as his little band of personal attendants had, through Peter, avowed their faith that he was the expected Messiah,—from that moment he began to tell them of the fate that awaited him.[1] On one occasion, when all around him were filled with admiration of his mighty power, he said to his disciples, 'Let what the people are saying sink into your ears, for the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men.' It is popular applause that

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[1] Matt. xvi, 27; xvii, 22. Mark viii, 31; ix, 31. Luke ix, 22, 43, 44.

bewilders and intoxicates, and suggests political dreams. But when his friends avowed their faith in him, or when the acclamations of a crowd were ringing in his ears, it is singular, if he had political aims, that he should be found instantly alluding to his approaching death. When he entered Jerusalem, attended by an immense multitude rending the air with their shouts, instead of being moved by this imposing demonstration, he was weeping.[1]

It is not his explicit predictions of his fate that alone show how unlikely it is that his mind was ever beguiled with visions of political power. Far more impressively, because incidentally and by obscure allusions, it appears that no thought of temporal success possessed his mind. Once, when "there went great multitudes with him," curious to see what he would do and to catch every word that fell from his lips, he turned and told them that any one who would really follow him must take up his cross

[1] Luke xix. 41.

and come after him to execution.[1] Could anything show more decisively what he expected his own fate to be?

That it was not upon anything of a political nature that his thoughts were running, we have impressive evidence in that passage that tells us how he answered those who wanted to know why his disciples did not fast like the disciples of John.[2] To this question he replied, "*Can the guests at a bridal fast when the bridegroom has come, and is in the midst of them? But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then will they fast.*" This was evidently said at a time when, attended by admiring throngs, he must have appeared to his disciples to be carrying everything before him, and they were exulting in the most brilliant expectations. They were as joyous as the attendants at a wedding, and Jesus was among them as a bridegroom among his friends, the observed of all, the fountain of joy and honor.

[1] Luke xiv, 25, 27. [2] Matt. ix, 14–17.

To fast then, under such circumstances, was wholly out of place. It would never have done to pour the new wine of their gaiety into the old bottles of fasting and penance.[1] It was no time to fast. Had they attempted it, their tumultuous and effervescent emotions would have burst through the restraints of those threadbare and gloomy formalities. "But the time is coming," he added, and how touchingly mournful the allusion! "*when the bridegroom will be taken away from them*, and then they will fast."

On three different occasions he was asked for a sign.[2] And it is very striking to observe, first, that this demand was, on every one of these occasions, made just after he had done some extraordinary thing; and, in the next

[1] If the Pharisees understood him, I wonder whether they were not shocked when he implied that the fastings which they held so sacred, were no better than worn out old wine-skins and ragged old garments. His mode of expressing himself must have sounded very irreverent.

[2] Matt. xii, 38; John ii, 18; vi, 30.

place, that he always replied to this demand with an allusion to his approaching death. His answers at these times are all widely different in form, but in spirit, in their meaning, substantially one and the same. At one time, the reference is to the prophet Jonah; at another to the temple of his own body; and, on the third occasion, when the request for a sign is connected with a reference to the sign given by Moses in the manna that was supposed to have fallen from heaven, he says, in reply, that the manna which Moses gave to the fathers was not the true bread of heaven, that he himself was the true heavenly bread, and was about to give himself for the nourishment of men. Here again, as in the previous instances, his thoughts turn to his death.

I do not know whether there be anything in the whole New Testament history more impressively indicative of truth than the harmony among these incidents, hidden as it is from first sight by their great diversity in form, language, and circumstance.

Neither do I know how it could possibly be shown more satisfactorily that the idea con-

stantly present to the mind of Jesus was not a political empire but a violent death.

And what renders it still more improbable that he should have indulged in any political aspirations is the fact that, not only was his mind possessed with the idea that his career was soon to be terminated by death, not only did he foresee his fate, and know that it was inevitable, but, what is far more remarkable, he knew that it was essential to his success. He not only had made up his mind that he must die, but he held his death to be as indispensable to the triumph of his Truth, as it is to a seed, if it is to produce fruit, that it should be buried in the earth.[1] Mark with what solemn emphasis he announces the necessity of his dying: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you,*" (*Indeed, indeed, it is so*)—and by what a simple, natural analogy he illustrates it,—"*except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life*

[1] John xii. 24.

will lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world will keep it forever."

When we have fathomed the meaning of these words, when we appreciate the clear and far insight which they attest in the speaker, we shall see that he who uttered such sayings, and was so single-hearted withal, is not lightly to be suspected of political designs.

As Mr. Parker has remarked, "it lay in the nature of things" that Jesus, speaking the truths which he did, should have been persecuted and put to death by the priests and Pharisees. Since it was thus natural, under the circumstances, that he should suffer a violent death, we see how natural it was that Jesus himself, wise and clear-sighted as he was, should foresee his own fate. To see that fate in the future required in him certainly no special illumination.

What a halo of sanctity invests his person when it is considered that all those immortal precepts of wisdom, all those renowned parables, all those acts of a self-forgetting charity,

were the words and works of a young man, living that calm, coherent, and generous life under the ever-deepening shadow of a terrible doom, and fully aware of it all the time. Occasionally, for a brief moment, he was agonized at the appalling outlook, but habitually his heart, instead of being hardened or broken, instead of being crushed or self-absorbed, gushed out in profoundest sympathy with the Highest and the Lowest.

While there are the indications, which I have mentioned, of a mind in Jesus far above all worldly ambition, I freely admit that much of his language respecting the kingdom of Heaven seems, at first sight, to imply that he shared in the popular impression of his day. But that peculiarity of popular speech, of which I have spoken, being kept in view, does it not go far to show that he is not of necessity to be understood as entertaining the popular ideas?

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel, there is a very imposing scenic representa-

tion of the coming of the Messiah that the Jewish nation was looking for with the utmost impatience. It begins thus: "*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then will he sit upon his glorious throne, and before him will be gathered all nations, &c.*"

Now in this whole description, extending from the thirty-first verse to the end of the chapter, all, I conceive, that is specially taught by Jesus, all that was novel and striking to his hearers, is the declaration of the grounds upon which the awards of that higher condition of things that was expected, would be made. All the rest is the now stiff and cumbrous Jewish costume, which the central and prominent idea took from the fashion of thinking popular at the time, and which was then easy and graceful. It was not at all the purpose of Jesus in this passage to inform the people that the Messiah was coming, and under the circumstances above described. Of all these things they had long been so well assured, that their faith neither needed nor received any confirmation from him. But what he did intend to im-

press upon the minds of his hearers was, that *when* the new order of things should come, those who had a care for the lowliest would be received, and those who neglected them would be cast out with sorrow and shame. And this was all that his hearers learned from him. The kingdom described in this passage is the kingdom of Righteousness, existing in the eternal nature of things; in other words, "prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world." With all its Jewish garb, we find in this passage an idea of the kingdom very different from the popular idea of that day. After the same manner of speaking, one might say now that, 'when the Judge shall be seated and the book opened, we shall not be asked to what church we have belonged, but whether we have been just and humane.' In expressing this sentiment in this form, it is not our purpose, nor are we understood, to intimate our belief in a literal Day of Judgment. That is not the point.

It will help us to understand the position which Jesus held in relation to the ideas of the

kingdom popular among his countrymen, to consider how his personal disciples stood affected towards these same ideas while he was living and after his death.

So long as they were in personal attendance upon him, their minds were filled with Jewish visions of a temporal empire shortly to be established. But, as it is easy and most interesting to remark, there was, slowly and unconsciously, formed within them a new interest. A new love was germinating in their inmost hearts,—the love of the True and the Good, exemplified in Jesus,—which gradually and naturally displaced their Jewish ideas. So that, after his disappearance, although I do not suppose that they ever, to the day of their death, formally renounced their old Jewish conceptions of the kingdom, yet, I think, they lost their interest in them as they became interested in things infinitely better. The old, gorgeous vision of a temporal kingdom receded. The venerable idea of Jesus was steadily taking the central place in their affection. It so contented them, that, while they still looked for the coming of the great kingdom, and in that generation, as

many passages in the Epistles show, they were every day becoming more and more reconciled to its indefinite postponement.

Now, just as this higher love in the hearts of his disciples superseded their old ideas, so, I conceive, in the mind of Jesus himself, the central place was given to those great moral truths, to the illustration of which his life was devoted. It may be that Jewish ideas and visions still floated within the sphere of his mind, but they were very dim and distant. They had no vitality. They interposed no veil to contract the breadth of his vision. They had none of his attention, except as they might help to set forth those grand moral features of the Divine kingdom which had his whole heart.

I cannot conceive how it could have been otherwise. The truths of which he shows such a thorough appreciation, and which his whole history exemplifies, are, in their very essence, of so regenerating an efficacy, that, when they once have entire possession of a man, as they had of him, it must needs be that all narrow modes of thinking retire before them. Truth is of so beneficent and powerful a nature, that

it always enlarges and elevates the mind in which it is accorded its rightful place. It is true, very often old prepossessions still remain, but only as the old bark remains attached to the tree long after it has been outgrown by the new bark fully formed underneath. It has no living connection with the tree. It does not injure it, nor retard its growth. It only does not fall wholly away at once. Is it not constantly witnessed how, a new interest being awakened in a man in the great Cause of Humanity, for instance, which is now wrestling with our age, he very soon grows indifferent to those old theological fictions which he esteemed just now the essence of all truth? Truth is intrinsically luminous, electric, vital,—there is nothing so much so,—and does not dwell in a man to no purpose. It enables him to distinguish.

That Truth, heartily embraced, as Jesus embraced it, expands and enlightens, and renders the moral sense discriminating, we may learn from perceiving how Error, on the other hand,

when embraced with a like heartiness, blinds the understandings and dulls the moral sentiments, even of the ablest and most accomplished. To the fearfully blinding influence of error, Theodore Parker, standing in the front in the great Battle of Freedom, cannot be insensible, perceiving as he must how the sanction given by the public opinion and law of this formidable nation to the monstrous wrong of Slavery is, at this present, undermining the moral faith and degrading the moral sense of the civilized world. The suffering which Slavery inflicts upon its millions of victims is the least of its curses. The horror of the thing is the moral blindness which it produces in those who advocate it, be they never so wise and learned. Under the countenance of this people, sworn as we are to maintain the Declaration of Human Rights, the revival of the African Slave-trade, as a thing fit to be discussed, is shamelessly intruding upon Kings and Cabinets. And there is no Power to cry: Hush! From this beacon of Liberty, as it professes to be, darkness is raying out over the nations.

From this terrible effect of moral error in

turning hearts of flesh into stone, and in striking blind the most keen-sighted, scholars, statesmen, and divines, we may form some idea of the blessed influence of Truth, of a spirit, self-sacrificing as was that of Jesus, in illuminating the inward vision.

But not only is he charged with having had political plans, it is intimated, in a general way, that, although Jesus of Nazareth uttered some great truths, taught certain very broad principles, yet that he did not himself appreciate them in their breadth, but was in fact, in some respects, an ignorant enthusiast, sharing in the narrow ideas and prejudices of his nation.

In my view, it is vastly more probable that any passage in his history, which may seem to countenance such a representation of him, is either misunderstood or erroneously reported, than that this idea of his character should be just. And I am not aware of saying this, because I have any disposition to claim for him an impossible perfection. The simple truth is,

that he appears to me to have evinced on numerous occasions such a clear, comprehensive moral sense, as renders any supposition more becoming and more probable than that he should have had views and purposes so narrow and external as Mr. Parker attributes to him.[1] Here it is that the saying of Coleridge becomes applicable: "When you cannot understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding."[2] It is much

[1] *Discourse of Religion*, p. 239. Fourth Edition.

[2] "*Until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding.* This *golden rule* of mine does, I own, resemble those of Pythagoras in its obscurity rather than in its depth. If, however, the reader will permit me to be my own Hierocles, I trust that he will find its meaning fully explained by the following instances. I have now before me a treatise of a religious fanatic, full of dreams and supernatural experiences. I see clearly the writer's grounds and their hollowness. I have a complete insight into the causes which, through the medium of his body, had acted on his mind; and, by application of received and ascertained laws, I can satisfactorily explain to my own reason all the strange incidents which the writer records of himself. And this I can do without suspecting him of any intentional falsehood. As when in broad daylight a man tracks the steps of a traveller, who had lost his way in a fog or by treacherous

more rational, and a great deal more modest, to suppose that either the language of Jesus has

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moonshine, even so, and with the same tranquil sense of certainty, can I follow the traces of this bewildered visionary. *I understand his ignorance.*

"On the other hand, I have been re-perusing with the best energies of my mind the TIMÆUS of Plato. Whatever I comprehend impresses me with a reverential sense of the author's genius; but there is a considerable portion of the work to which I can attach no consistent meaning. In other treatises of the same philosopher, intended for the average comprehension of men, I have been delighted with the masterly good sense, with the perspicuity of language, and the aptness of the inductions. I recollect, likewise, that numerous passages in this author, which I thoroughly comprehend, were formerly no less unintelligible to me than the passages now in question. It would, I am aware, be quite fashionable to dismiss them as Platonic jargon. But this I cannot do with satisfaction to my own mind, because I have sought in vain for causes adequate to the solution of the assumed inconsistency. I have no insight into the possibility of a man so eminently wise, using words with such half-meanings to himself as must perforce pass into no-meanings to his readers. When, in addition to the motives thus suggested by my own reason, I bring into distinct remembrance the number and the series of great men, who, after long and zealous study of these works, have joined in honoring the name of Plato with epithets that almost transcend humanity, I feel that a contemptuous verdict

been incorrectly reported, or that it is not understood, than that one, who had such an insight into man and the nature of true power, one who, like Jesus, had fathomed "the divine depth of sorrow," and found dominion and blessedness there, seeing distinctly an unearthly glory shining through death and ignominy, should have been under the gross Jewish delusion of a temporal kingdom.

On the whole, very manifest is it to my mind that Jesus, being of the people and speaking to the people, used popular language, such forms of expression as were current and alone intelligible. In order, therefore, to avoid ascribing things to him that he never taught, we must keep in mind what I have stated, namely, that words in common use are continually losing the

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on my part might argue a want of modesty, but would hardly be received by the judicious as evidence of superior penetration. Therefore, utterly baffled in all my attempts to understand the ignorance of Plato, *I conclude myself ignorant of his understanding*."—*Coleridge, Biog. Lit.*

meaning which they originally expressed, and coming in time merely to designate facts, without involving any recognition of that theory of the facts which they originally represented. Thus we talk of "*lunacy*," "*St. Vitus's dance*," "*St. Anthony's fire*," using these terms merely to denote certain diseases.

Christ speaks frequently of the Evil one. In the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil," should be, "Deliver us from the Evil one." It has consequently been set down as a matter beyond all dispute that he taught the personality of evil, and that this idea rests on his express authority.

But the very plain truth is, that, as bodily and mental diseases were in his times attributed to malignant spirits, so moral evil was in like manner ascribed to an evil being. And so fixed and universal was this faith long before the time of Christ that it had created and moulded the forms of language, in which moral evil was spoken of, and which soon came to be

employed merely to represent the facts of sin and temptation. At the present day, I can readily imagine Mr. Parker to say, for instance, (it is not impossible that he has said it, there is no doubt he thinks it,) that "the Fugitive Slave law was enacted at the instigation of the devil." I should hold him to be perfectly true and honest in this assertion. At the same time, I should not consider myself at liberty to infer from his use of this mode of expression that he believed in the personality of the devil. I should understand him as employing this mode of speaking, not by any means for the sake of what it literally imports, but to emphasize a fact.

So, when Jesus related to his friends his experience in the desert, whither he was impelled after his baptism, he represented the evil thoughts that occurred to him as the spoken suggestions of the Evil one. But I have no idea, either that he intended, or that his disciples understood him to say, that Evil came and spoke to him with an audible voice and a visible presence. In the terms which were then the universal form of describing temptation, he told

the story of his trials. And all that they who listened to him, gathered from the account was, simply, that he had been tempted by evil.[1]

I do not mean to assert that neither he nor they entertained the idea of a personal evil power, but only that it was not an idea which he undertook to teach. The modes of speaking which he employed, prove nothing, as to his positive belief in the personality of Evil. In all probability, he did have such a belief, if that can be called a belief, which was the result of no personal examination, into which no distinct thought entered, and which really had no vital influence in his mind.

So, also in regard to other points upon which

[1] In order to understand how it is that the temptation of Jesus should be told as it is, in the form of a dialogue between him and the Evil one, it must be borne in mind that it is characteristic of times and persons retaining any degree of primitive simplicity, to represent the silent operations of thought dramatically—to put them in words. The gospels abound in examples in point. "And they that sat at meat with him *began to say within themselves, Who is this*," &c. Luke vii, 49.

Jesus is represented to have given positive instruction, I can readily imagine, without detracting from his greatness, that he had no personal convictions, affirmative or negative. He has been and still is understood to teach the endless punishment of the wicked, and the material fire of hell. But it is a point beyond dispute, that he did not originate the representations of punishment and hell-fire which we find in his teachings. They were the popular ideas of the time; or rather, they had ceased to be definite, living ideas in men's minds, and had become mere phrases, figures of speech, into which, by connecting them with those grand and indisputable truths which he taught, he breathed a new and spiritual significance; and they are to be interpreted in accordance with those truths. They were the current coin, worn smooth by long use, which, passing through his mind, were re-stamped with the cipher of his invisible realm, and are now to receive their valuation from the standard of his truth.

That he used the language of his day in the manner I have described, is strikingly shown in that passage in which, under popular forms of

speech, he refers to the temporal prosperity and temporal decline of Capernaum: "*Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, will be cast down to hell.*" Is there any reference here to the fiery hell of modern theologians? Surely not.

Let it be reiterated, if we would not fall into the greatest mistakes in ascertaining what he actually taught, that the use of long-established forms of speech affords no certain index of individual opinion as to the precise ideas which those forms of speech primarily signified.

I CANNOT refrain from expressing my astonishment that Mr. Parker should refer to Matthew vii, 13, 14, in proof that Jesus "considered God so imperfect as to damn the majority of mankind to eternal torment."[1] "*Enter ye in at*

[1] *Discourse of Religion*, p. 239. Mr. Parker is not always careful in his statements. While in the passage referred to he explicitly affirms the above to have been the doctrine of Christ, elsewhere (p. 125) in alluding to the dogma "which dooms the mass of men to endless torment," he remarks, "the wisest of the Heathen taught such a dogma *as little as did Jesus of Nazareth.*"

the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." I do greatly err in my understanding of this passage, if there is the slightest allusion here to anything like the Calvinistic doctrine of the eternity of hell torments. Is it anything more than a simple picture of human life? Does not every generation illustrate it? Wisdom has her few followers, Folly her hosts. Wisdom leads to life, Folly to ruin. Ancient authors, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, have given similar representations. Every Latin schoolboy remembers a parallel passage in the *Tabula* of Cebes.[1]

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[1] *σοὶ δ' ἐγὼ ἐσθλὰ νοέων ἐρέω, μέγα νήπιε Πέρση.*
τὴν μέν τοι κακότητα καὶ ἱλαδόν ἐστιν ἑλέσθαι
ῥηϊδίως· λείη μὲν ὁδός, μάλα δ' ἐγγύθι ναίει.
τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἱδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάροιθεν ἔθηκαν
ἀθάνατοι· μακρὸς δὲ καὶ ὄρθιος οἶμος ἐπ' αὐτὴν,
καὶ τρηχὺς τὸ πρῶτον· ἐπὴν δ' εἰς ἄκρον ἵκηαι,
ῥηϊδίη δὴ ἔπειτα πέλει, χαλεπὴ περ ἐοῦσα.

Hesiod, ΕΡΓ. κ. ΗΜ: 262.

"SELL *all thou hast, and give to the poor and follow me.*"[1] "But sell not all thou hast, except thou come, and follow me; that is, except thou have a vocation, wherein thou mayest do as much good, with little means, as with great."[2]

I infer from Mr. Parker's criticisms of the moral teachings of Jesus, that the above requisition is regarded by him as overstrained. But I cannot perceive how, under the circumstances, Jesus could have enjoined anything else. It

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TRANSLATION.

"To thee now reflecting I tell very good things, O simple young Perses,
Badness is easily chosen, it's found in the greatest abundance.
Level and plain is the pathway, its entrance is open to all men,
But labor in front of true virtue is placed by the Powers immortal,
And narrow and steep is the road to it, and at first 'tis exceedingly rugged;
But when after labor unceasing thou hast finally climbed to the summit,
Then truly it grows very easy, though toilsome it hath been aforetime."

[H. H. F.]

[1] Matt. xix, 22.

[2] *Of Goodness of Nature. Bacon's Essays.*

was not the first injunction laid upon the rich young man to whom it was addressed. He was first directed by Jesus to obey the commandments. And when he said that he had always done that, and desired to know what more he could do, then it was that he was bidden to sell all that he had. If he had thrown in his lot with Jesus, he would have been forced to give up his wealth. What wiser thing could he do then, than to dispose of it first as Jesus directed?

But even supposing this demand to be somewhat too high-toned for our common human nature,—the inability of the rich youth to comply with it seems to indicate as much, and Jesus himself declares that it was all but impossible to the rich,—I think, for any exaggeration there may be in it, the evidence which it furnishes of the insensibility of Jesus to all mercenary considerations is ample compensation. It suggests a very striking contrast between him and his modern followers. He did not hesitate to impose upon the wealthy young man,—and wealthy young men were not numerous among his friends,—a requisition that drove the youth away instantly, and lost him

his influence upon the young man's mind forever. Christians at the present day take very good care how they run the hazard of losing wealthy converts by suggesting any such uncompromising conditions. Christian churches and Associations, Tract societies, &c., account it wrong to risk their influence with the rich and powerful by insisting even upon what certainly cannot be regarded as an exaggerated duty, namely, that they should cease from buying and selling their fellow-men, who chance to be of a different complexion from their own.

Mr. Parker mentions as one of the "obvious defects" of Christ as a Teacher, that he bade his disciples, when they should be arraigned before magistrates and kings, to have no anxiety as to what they should say, as it would be given them what to say.[1] Mr. Parker appears to regard this as the extravagant promise of a mere enthusiast.

As I read it, it is the language of truth and

[1] *Discourse of Religion*, p. 240.

wisdom. Jesus told his friends that they would be summoned to answer for themselves before high dignitaries of the Church and State. The prospect might well fill them with dismay. What were they, rude, simple men, to do in such august presences! Would they not tremble from head to foot, and be bereft of all power to articulate a word? But he assured them they need feel no alarm. With the occasion would come all needed power. *It would be given them*, that is, *they would be able* to acquit themselves as they ought. Truth, ever bountiful, would take care of her faithful servants. The Cause, for which they would be carried before the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals, would be a fountain of inspiration, full and overflowing. It would not be they who would speak, but the Truth, that great power of God.

I THINK it very important to consider, in order to a just appreciation of the teachings of Jesus, that what he taught is not true merely because he taught it, but that he taught it

because it is true. His thoughts are not the creations of his fancy. He does not express opinions. He declares facts, pre-existent and irreversible laws. In every utterance of his, I look for and I find, under all the stiff and antiquated costume of the language in which it is clothed, *the truth* that he teaches; by this I mean the thought which, when fully perceived, offers evidence in and of itself to its truth,—shines by its own light.

To perceive that Jesus taught only what is intrinsically and eternally true, let the reader of the Gospels substitute *will* for *shall*, in the Beatitudes, for instance: 'Happy they who mourn, for they *will* be comforted!' 'Happy the gentle, for they *will* inherit the earth!' 'Happy they who hunger and thirst for the Right, for they *will* be filled!' &c.

In other passages, too numerous to specify, the same change may be made with great advantage. *Shall* expresses primarily authority. It implies the exercise of an arbitrary will on

the part of the speaker. Whereas *will* is simply significant of the future. It represents, not an arbitrary promise or threat, but a certain consequence. 'Happy they who hunger and thirst for the Right, for they *will* be filled,' i. e., naturally and of necessity. So is it in the unchangeable nature of things. They who hunger and thirst for other things are never satisfied. But the very desire for righteousness refreshes.

The substitution of *will* for *shall*, in disclosing the indisputable truth of the teachings of Jesus, relieves him from the appearance of making arbitrary announcements, when he is only declaring the pre-established laws of the moral world, teaching, in a word, the Religion of Nature. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many *will* seek to enter in, and *will* not be able." "Many that are first *will* be last, and the last, first." "Unto every one who hath *will* be given, and he *will* have abundance, but from him that hath not *will* be taken away even that which he hath;" i. e., 'He who improves, will increase in power, but he who does not improve will lose what power he has.' An indisputable law of our nature. "Ask and ye

will receive, seek and ye *will* find." Not an arbitrary promise, but a necessary result is here signified. Open the Four Gospels at random, and you cannot read a few consecutive verses without finding occasion to make this substitution. Thus my eye has just fallen upon the twenty-first verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew. "Verily I say unto you that one of you *will* betray me." Again, at the close of the twenty-fifth chapter of the same Gospel, "These *will* go away into enduring punishment," &c.

[In citing this last passage, I read *enduring* instead of *everlasting*, because, as I believe, it expresses exactly the meaning of the original Greek word *αἰώνιος*, which is simply indefinite.]

Why is it that we are so ready, when any beautiful thing in Nature or Art is before us, to fasten our attention instantly upon its defects, or what strike us as its defects? I am slow to believe that it comes from a depraved disposition, or from the absence of that charity that

finds pleasure, not in iniquity but in truth. The artist, who hung one of his paintings outside of his door with the request that the passers-by would be pleased to mark its faults on the canvas, and who was dismayed at night to find it marked all over as one mass of faults, was consoled the next night by finding it again in the same condition, when, after erasing all the marks, he had exhibited it a second time with the request that people would be so kind as to indicate its beauties. Unless there is some passion to be gratified, or some interest to be served, men are as willing to note excellencies as faults, indeed a great deal more willing. For our heart and our flesh crieth out for the Perfect. Man is made for the Highest, and nothing less can long content him. And for this reason it is that faults offend us, and we criticise them as if we were resenting personal wrongs. They are trespasses on our birthright, which is Perfection. This is the inexorable demand which no bribe can buy off, no compromise satisfy.

Although the disposition so commonly shown to dwell upon defects admits of so favorable a

construction, still the happier course and the wiser is to seek first in all things the true and the good,—to dwell upon beauties rather than faults. We are not to be blind to faults, but to estimate them aright. And this we can do only by ascertaining first and always the good there is in everything. Look for the evil first and exclusively, and you will be sure to overestimate it; thus error ensues, and evil multiplies itself. We find only what we seek. It is a principle of criticism, essentially religious, that no reviewer can deal justly with a book, unless he first reads it in faith and love, as if he himself had written it. We must endeavor to ascertain what of truth there is in any work before we can be prepared to tell its defects. Here is a principle that applies to the least thing as to the highest. If a new edible is brought to you, and you put it to your lips as if it were poison or a drug, it will be pretty sure to offend the palate. To do it justice, and to know the quality of its taste, you must take one mouthful of it as if you relished it. Wisely has it been said, that it is not enough to be able to see that any opinion is false, the aim should

be to discover how it ever appeared true to any one.

Able and learned men have formed themselves into committees, and tried to settle the claims of this new and strange growth called *Spiritualism*. Their efforts have come to nothing. They have satisfied nobody who was not satisfied before.

The reason of their failure is plain. Their criticism has all been based upon the assumption, openly made or secretly and unconsciously, that the thing to be examined is an unmitigated delusion. It followed of necessity that their learning and ability, so far from qualifying them to render a final judgment, satisfactory to all parties, made it certain at the outset that they would make good their ground. Just in proportion to their ability and culture, they were sure to accomplish this purpose. Of what use is it to be wise and learned, if one cannot maintain any ground he chooses to take?

Let those who undertake to investigate the

merits of Spiritualism, start with a different aim. Let them assume that there is truth, fact, in it, of one kind or another. This assumption does not foreclose examination. It authorizes, nay, it invites the closest. It challenges the utmost sagacity. When Truth is singly sought, its existence must be presumed, and then it is very certain to be found, although it may be present in very small measure.

Undertake an examination of the New Testament history, assuming that it is all a fable, and just in proportion to the completeness of your critical apparatus and your ability, will be your success in satisfying yourself, and all who are of the same way of thinking, of the soundness of your assumption.

All the attempts that have been made to point out defects in the character and teachings of Jesus have always betrayed a want of appreciation of his real greatness, by being, more or less obviously, directed not at him and at his doctrines, but at the false representations that

have been made of these; the falsehood of which would have been seen at once, had there been a just estimate of him beforehand. Objectors find material for unfavorable criticism of the Gospels only by putting into them modern ideas, which have no right to be there, and which the language of the Scriptures, correctly interpreted, does not express. Poor Shelley raves against Jesus Christ as the enemy of Truth and Freedom. I cannot be shocked at the ravings of the young poet, I pity him so. It is evident that he had suffered to be palmed off upon him a monstrous fiction, created out of the false theology of Christendom for the veritable Man of Nazareth, the Bringer of Light and Liberty.

The same is more or less the mistake of all who have undertaken to speak or to write in depreciation of Jesus. It is not Jesus himself, but an erroneous idea of him, or a mistaken interpretation of his language, which they are found to be criticising. It will be time enough to begin looking for the defects of this extraordinary character, when, after studying it thoroughly in reverence and love, we come to

appreciate its greatness. When we have once caught a glimpse of that, we shall hesitate long before we presume to talk about its defects.

Jesus of Nazareth was human. Being human, he had limitations. He manifested not absolute perfection, but the perfection of an imperfect nature. "There is none good but one, God."

All the imperfections, however, that I see in the personal character of Christ serve only to enhance his greatness, and render my sense of the singular elevation of this wonderful man only the more profound.

He was evidently a man of profound sensibility. I observe in him constantly the strongest emotion. Sometimes his anger was aroused, and in no slight degree. When some of the leading men, professed teachers of religion, were watching to see whether he would perform an office of humanity on the Sabbath, in order that they might charge him with violating its sanctity, first intimating that their thoughts

were murderous, "he looked on them with *indignation*." The Greek word is a very strong one, elsewhere translated *wrath*. On another occasion, when he was rebuked by 'the ruler of the synagogue' for healing a poor woman on the Sabbath, it is difficult to imagine him as speaking save in a tone of awful severity. He stigmatized the man as a hypocrite,—called him so to his face. Again, when his disciples would fain have prevented certain women from bringing their children to him, he was "much displeased." He was angry then with his own friends; and that countenance, which, I doubt not, was turned with a beaming smile of tenderness upon the little ones, was darkened a moment before with great displeasure. How deeply he was moved at being charged with being in league with Beelzebub, is evident from the strong language in which he answers the charge, pronouncing those who brought it incorrigible, past all hope of mercy. It was the language of intense feeling. And so absorbed was he on that occasion, that when he is suddenly interrupted and told that his mother wanted to speak with him, he seems bewildered

for a moment, and exclaims, "Who is my mother!" Can it be imagined that his eye did not flash—that there was no tone of severity in his voice, when he said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Or that he spoke without passion, when he poured out upon the ruling classes, the Scribes and Pharisees, those fiery denunciations? His language, the language of a man shocked to the inmost at the depravity which he describes, is so strong and so severe that some have thought it did not become him. But there is ample reason to believe that it was strictly true. The horrible death which he suffered shows how unprincipled they were,—hearts of stone,—hesitating at nothing,—the men who murdered him. His fate proves that he described them in fitting words, for it shows that they were ready for any enormity.

On more than one occasion ejaculations of impatience broke from his lips: "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be

with you! How long shall I bear with you!"[1] "I have a baptism to go through, and how am I agonized till it be over!"[2] "What thou doest, do quickly."[3] What a cry of human weakness, wrung from him by extreme suffering, rose from his Cross! "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"[4] What a revelation of human infirmity, of a nature worn down and well-nigh crushed, is that scene in the garden, when he told his disciples that his distress was so great that it seemed to him as if he should die![5] "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; wait here and watch with me." He wanted to be alone, and yet he could not bear to be alone. In his agony he threw himself prostrate on the earth, and the sweat fell from him like heavy drops of blood.[6] Three times,

[1] Matt. xvii, 17.
[2] Luke xii, 50.
[3] John xiii, 27.
[4] Matt. xxvii, 46.
[5] Matt. xxvi, 38.
[6] The narrative does not say that blood fell from him instead of sweat,—blood could not have been distinguished in the dark,—but that his sweat was like, '*as it were*,' great drops of blood. (Luke xxii, 44.) How this circumstance became known to the disciples in the dark, and when they were, as they state, asleep, is one of those questions that may

not enduring to be alone, he went and awoke his disciples with reproachful words at their insensibility, thus turning from God to man, from man to God, in a state of mind bordering on distraction. He had exhausted himself in comforting them. But they fell asleep and could give him no comfort in return. So evident is his prostrate condition at this hour, that orthodox Christians have said that his human nature was then forsaken by his Divine nature; an explanation proposed, without any warrant in the Record, merely to save a theological theory which has as little foundation in Scripture as in Reason.

Again, he had seasons equally human, of

remain unanswered without invalidating the fact. It may easily be imagined that when Jesus went to awaken his friends, his sweat fell upon the face or the hand of one or another, in a drop or drops so heavy and large as to seem like blood. Had it really been blood, they would hardly have thought of calling it sweat, or the mode of describing it would have been reversed, and they would have said that blood fell from him as it were sweat.

great exaltation of mind, bordering on ecstasy; as at his baptism, when every veil was drawn aside and he looked into heaven, and a dove, hovering within the sphere of his rapt vision, as he came out of the water with eyes uplifted in prayer, lost its familiar appearance and was transfigured into a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit! When the seventy, whom he sent forth to announce the heavenly kingdom, returned, and reported the sensation which the annunciation caused, "I beheld Satan," he exclaimed, "as lightning fall from heaven!"[1] Again, when the Samaritans came running to him at the well, drawn by the report of the woman whom he met there, how greatly was he exhilarated! The conversation of the woman refreshed him so that his hunger vanished, and his disciples had to entreat him to eat; the moral field then seemed to him all ripe for the harvest. For the moment all difficulties vanished before him.

All these indications of our human nature,

[1] Luke x, 18.

so far from causing the slightest diminution of our reverence for him, only render him the more admirable, because they attest a nature tender and susceptible, and heighten the effect of the great qualities which he uniformly showed. It would have implied great insensibility had he never been angry, never been tempted, never moved to tears, never exalted nor depressed. If no word of mortal passion had ever come from him, it would have gone far to prove that he was constitutionally hard, different from other men. These manifestations of weakness command our sympathy by showing us ourselves in him. They reveal his near relationship to us. They make him one with us. Descending with him into the depths, the more reverently do we scan the heaven-reaching heights to which he ascended.

The Man of Nazareth is remarkable not only for the depth and breadth of his intuitions, but also for the *delicacy* of his spiritual sense. It is as delicate as it is strong. The leading moral

teachers of antiquity give one the impression, together with a certain rugged grandeur, of a boyish if not barbarian simplicity, that did not always distinguish things indifferent from vital truths. They are great, but they are antique. With all their superiority to their times, they still belonged to them. But in him there is a fine finish of the moral nature which is in advance of the world, even now after eighteen centuries, and which tells less of a Past than of a Future. No culture that has yet been realized, however refined, can look down upon him.

When even the gentlest of his friends was ready to invoke fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans, "*Ye know not,*" said he, "*what manner of spirit ye are of.*"[1] Again, when a certain man begged him to speak to his brother to divide their patrimony, "*Man,*" said he, "*who made me a judge or a divider over you?*"[2]

What a striking instance have we of the delicacy of his mind in the way in which he received the costly offering of Mary's reverence![3] The suggestion, "*Why was not this*

[1] Luke ix, 55. [2] Luke xii, 14. [3] Matt. xxvi, 6–13.

ointment sold and given to the poor?" is so very plausible that, at the first blush, one is inclined to think that it would best become Jesus himself to have made it, seeing that he had so special an interest in the poor. But no, he disregards the suggestion, postpones the claims of the poor, and accepts and appropriates to himself the precious ointment, declaring that Mary was doing rightly.

We have here, by the way, one of those incidents in the history which seem at first sight to be at variance with the spirit of his character. He is represented as being indifferent to those to whose welfare he was devoting his life. But under the apparent contradiction, only a finer consistency is revealed. All the circumstances of the occasion being considered, we perceive a tenderness of mind and a truth of feeling which only a person of profound humanity could have evinced.

In the coincidence of this act of Mary with his situation as a man doomed to die, and that so shortly that he seemed to himself all but prepared for the last offices, he discerned a significance so sacred as to outweigh far all the

good, of which the mere commercial worth of the ointment might have been the means. Not that any calculation of the different uses of the costly ointment passed through his mind. It is the delicate and yet healthy tenderness of his sensibility, his "reason above reason," that impresses us. As the ointment, doubtless, was of that costly kind kept almost exclusively for the dead, when its rich funereal perfume struck his sense, there was given in his mind the added sacredness of death to the already holy sentiment of reverent affection, which prompted Mary to the act; a sentiment not to be frustrated for any ordinary reason, a sentiment more nourishing to the world than a thousand deeds of common charity. How natural was it, in the then state of his mind, looking on himself as on the brink of the grave, that this act of Mary's should impress him so profoundly! He could not but have regarded it, at such a moment, as an offering of affection, pure even to sanctity, and as suggested rather by a Divine impulse than by any common human feeling. And what must have rendered it to the last degree impressive, was the strong contrast in

which it stood out with the coarse-mindedness that grudged him this last expression of personal affection.

Again. When he told his disciples that one of them was about to prove false, — a fact, which, as he said, he informed them of beforehand, that they might continue to believe in him afterwards, recollecting then, as they would recollect, that he had been prepared for all that happened,—the care he shows not to mention the name of Judas, to avoid betraying his betrayer to the indignation of his fellow-disciples, evinces a generosity so delicate, that, when we once appreciate it, we shall hesitate long before we venture to represent him as under any moral delusion whatever. One, so clear-sighted as he is seen to be on these different occasions, is not to be charged with being misled by private aims or strong national prejudices, certainly not by any one who does not claim to possess a moral sense equally delicate and true.

That he never shows his Hebrew blood in his mind, that he was a stranger to the pride of

birth, for instance, so characteristic of the descendants of Abraham, I am far from saying. On more than one occasion, the Jewish sentiment is evident in him. But then the manifestation of it is either perfectly innocent; or, what is more striking, it is attended by circumstances which render the final impression one of great liberality.

I say his Jewish blood shows itself sometimes very innocently; and, in so saying, I have in mind his indignant address to the ruler of the synagogue, who objected to the cure on the Sabbath of the woman who had been a sufferer for eighteen years. "Hypocrite!" exclaimed Jesus, "is there a man of you that does not on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, *being a daughter of Abraham*, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?"[1] In this allusion to the woman's Hebrew origin, do we not catch a tone of the proud ancestral instinct of the Jew?

Again, the Jew is recognizable in the sur-

[1] Luke xiii, 10–17.

prise which he expressed at the faith of the Roman Centurion.[1] He evidently did not look for it. He had not thought it possible to find such susceptibility to good impressions in a Gentile. But then the liberal tendency of his mind is seen in the grand hint which he catches from the faith of the Centurion. Through this unlooked-for instance, as through a rent in the veil of Futurity, he looks forth, and, in interpreting the faith of the Roman as a revelation of human nature, he sees men coming to the knowledge of Truth from the remotest quarters of the earth. While his astonishment discloses the Jew, with instinctive openness he leaps to the largest inferences, and shows that he contemplated an influence extending far beyond his own nation.

He manifests his Jewish birth and culture in the zeal for the sanctity of the Temple, that prompted him to take a whip of small cords,[2] and drive from the sacred inclosure those who, in the blind eagerness for gain, had encroached upon it with their tables for the exchange of money, and their doves, and other animals,

[1] Matt. viii, 10. [2] *Jesus and his Biographers.*

offered for sale to those who desired victims for the altar. I suppose there was no one thing that he did, more likely than this, to make him popular with the masses. They could understand an enthusiastic reverence for the Temple, while they were insensible to the sanctity of human rights. They were not peculiar in this respect.

But the most marked manifestation of Jewish feeling appears in his treatment of the Gentile mother who came entreating him to heal her daughter.[1] She annoyed him, according to the accounts, by her importunity. He was endeavoring to escape public notice. He had some urgent reason, so the narrative authorizes us to infer,—it does not state it,—to avoid being recognized. "He entered into a house and would have no man know it. But he could not be hid," because this woman called out after him, imploring his pity. For a space he took no notice of her. And when his disciples begged him to send her away, he intimated in reply that he should pay no attention to her request, as his concern was, not for Gentiles,

[1] Matt. xv, 25 ; Mark vii, 25.

but for "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and threw herself down before him saying, "Sir, help me." He replied, "*Let the children first be fed, for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs.*" This is the language of a Jew, of one who looked upon Gentiles as dogs in comparison with Israelites, the children of the great Household. But Jesus either spoke thus, conforming without thought to the mode of speaking belonging to the place and the time, in order to repulse this foreign woman, or curious to hear what she would say, he used this phraseology to discover whether she were in earnest. In either case, I do not know which is most impressive, the faith of the woman which would not be repulsed, or the promptness with which he yielded to her request, acknowledging her faith. Harsh as his words sound, I doubt whether there were any tone of harshness in his voice, any severity in his look. The woman's senses, sharpened by her great need, doubtless beheld in that countenance the light, and heard in that voice the music of his commanding humanity. After all, however we may think of his words, his act

was humane, and he commended and rewarded the woman's faith. Although he felt himself bound to labor only among his countrymen,—and it was the part of wisdom thus to concentrate his efforts,—yet he was not bigoted to this restriction. He did not make it a matter of conscience, or he would not have treated this Gentile as a daughter of Abraham, as he did when he yielded to her request.

But all these marks of his Hebrew blood serve only to set off the predominant liberality of his thoughts. Perceiving that he thus belonged to a nation as bigoted as the world has ever seen, we are only the more struck with the fact that he should have conceived, for instance, the parable of the Good Samaritan. What could be more offensive to Jewish pride than the contrast made so boldly in this parable between a Priest and a Levite on the one hand, and a despised Samaritan on the other. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is indicative of the same large, *un*-Jewish temper of mind. It evinces the decisive superiority of Jesus to the vulgar prejudices of his countrymen. The Pharisees were the leading men in

the religious world of the day; and how personally insulting this parable must have been to their whole body, it is not difficult to imagine. They must have thought his language, in reference to them, very abusive.

After all, in the best sense of the name, he was indeed a Hebrew of the Hebrews, 'the bright consummate flower' of that great race whose religious distinction it was that for the Being they worshipped they knew no symbol. As the nation went down in blood and ruin, its spirit escaped and arose in him in full-orbed splendor, and in him the lofty Hebrew element is still vital in the world.

It may be asked, by the way, how the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman was healed when she was not present. She was suffering, as I judge from the accounts, from one of those nervous diseases which are peculiarly sensitive to the influence of impressions made on the mind. It surely is not difficult to imagine how much the bare fact that her mother had gone

to seek the aid of one, the report of whose wonderful power was everywhere causing the greatest excitement, must have wrought to elate the mind of the suffering daughter. If we suppose, as we may very naturally, that the confidence of the mother in the power of Jesus had been expressed in the presence of her child, before she left home, we can easily see how her going for him must have so affected the daughter, that her cure may really have begun before the mother's return. And when the mother did return, every feature beaming with faith, the cure was made complete. Thus, through sympathy, the faith of the mother sufficed for the relief of her daughter.

So great was the faith of this woman that her daughter would be well if Jesus only said the word, that, upon receiving the desired assurance from him, she went away perfectly satisfied. If it be difficult for us to believe in the existence of a faith so strong, it is so, only because we do not duly consider the circumstances, nor bear in mind the overpowering influence which a great public excitement has upon individual minds. Mr. Carlyle, in his History of the

French Revolution—a work as extraordinary in Historical Literature as the event which it records was in human affairs,—has given us a vivid idea of the frenzy of 'preternatural suspicion,' which then seized the French people. The mind of the nation, wrenched away from its old habitudes, at one time ascended into a heaven of hope, and at another, went reeling down, sweeping resistlessly along with it the wisest and the most cool, into a very hell of fear and distrust, in which the ravings of madness were received as the inspirations of wisdom. But is it necessary to refer to such an extreme case in order to perceive how helpless individuals are against any passion or belief when once it has become epidemic? The history of the commercial world, the last place one would think to look for them, is full of instances of men the most phlegmatic, entertaining as the suggestions of prudence, speculations as wild as the tales of the Orient.

Now I am at a loss to conceive how it could have been otherwise than that, after a few only of the wonderful works of Jesus had been witnessed and rumored abroad, there should have

arisen a very whirlwind of faith in the public mind, by the force of which, individuals, especially if they or theirs were suffering under any physical infirmity, were caught up, lifted off their feet, raised to such a height of confidence in the power of Jesus as is shown in the Roman Centurion and the Syro-Phœnician woman, both of whom required only a word from him to insure the instant recovery of their absent children; and in the woman who came to Jesus and was healed by a mere touch of his garments. What distinguished the public excitement which he caused from those other instances of a like nature, to which I have just referred, was, that it was no delusion. There was an adequate cause for it. It was the effect, the reverberation of the transcendent faith of Jesus himself.

In the account of the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria, the following declaration is attributed to him: "*Ye worship*

ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."[1]

I cannot persuade myself that he ever uttered these words, not merely because they are so intensely Jewish, but also because they have no living connection with the passage in which they are found, but break violently in upon the great thoughts expressed. They have all the sound of an interpolation caused by some early transcriber with a strong Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans.

I HAVE remarked that no one has ever lived, of whom, from the accounts that have come to us, we may form so vivid an idea as of Jesus of Nazareth. There need be no doubt as to his essential qualities. And the reason is, that the incidents which make up his history are singularly personal. The history is never abstract, but circumstantial from beginning to end.

Being of this description, the facts are found to be just such as always impress themselves

[1] John iv, 22.

upon the minds of those who had part in them, beyond the possibility of being forgotten. There is scarcely an incident in the Four Gospels, which, when fully considered, with all its probable concomitants, is not perceived to be precisely of this memorable character. The powerful personality of Jesus took into itself the circumstances that surrounded it, and communicated to them, with its color and life, its immortality also. Whatever act he did and whatever word he uttered instantly rendered the spot and the moment remarkable, never to be forgotten by those present. So that, had he acted and spoken with a studied reference to a science of Mnemonics, he could not have provided more effectually for the preservation of his words and works. He wrote nothing; neither did he direct others to record his teachings and his life. There was no manner of need. The circumstances, in which he lived and spoke, set off so many at least of his sayings and doings as have come down to us, in a way so impressive that they were sure to be recorded. And yet those circumstances were not in themselves peculiar. Oftentimes they

were of the homeliest household sort. But such were his utterances in connection with them, that both together formed events of a marked and imperishable significance. And thus his every word became a Scripture, not writ with hands, nor in artificial characters, upon parchment or paper, but recorded, as all God's Scriptures are, in actual Life, and beyond the possibility of loss or erasure.

When, for instance, he turned and said to the crowd that was pressing upon him, their minds all burning with hopes of national deliverance, "*If a man hate not his father and mother, yea, and his own life also, he cannot go with me. He, who would indeed follow me, must take his cross and come after me to execution*," how was it possible that such words, uttered under such circumstances, could ever be forgotten? Most certain were they to be preserved in vivid remembrance, and, though held for a time in solution in the living hearts of men, yet to be precipitated at last, rather by a law of nature than by human design, in written characters on the page of history.

I think, as I have said, that nearly every

recorded incident of the Life of Jesus will vindicate its truth and immortality by being found, upon examination, to have been originally thus striking.

And then again how much did the allegorical style of his teachings insure their being remembered? The truths which he taught were thus given in the form of pictures, to seize and retain which, the mind is by its very nature prepared with as much nicety as the plates of Daguerre for the action of the light. They could not be forgotten. Jesus delivered no abstract discourses. Everything that he touched, were it with only the hem of his garment, instantly started into life, prepared to do his bidding. He made all things his heralds. All joined his retinue, demonstrating his authority, gracing the triumph of his truth.

Mr. Parker inclines to think that the loftiest sayings of Jesus are genuine. But what if it may be made to appear that nearly all his recorded sayings are lofty? Much that he said

and did is omitted. Granted. But according to my friend's thinking and mine, it is only the most striking things that have been recorded. The probability is, that what is lost was not so remarkable as what has been preserved. It is only of the last few hours of the life of Jesus, that we have anything like a regular narrative; which is as it should be. That was undoubtedly the most momentous part of his history. Then it was that his lofty spirit was put to the severest test, and manifested itself most impressively. The rest of the history is hardly anything more than a compilation of separate incidents, I suppose the most striking, put together, with so little observance of any order, that, as I have said, it is not possible to determine now, with any degree of certainty, how long his public career continued, whether two, three, or four years.

As I have just remarked, the brief biographies of Jesus are made up of personal anecdotes, of precisely such particulars as not only are best remembered, but as best give us an

insight into personal character. Incidents of that personal kind which we so often miss in the biographies of remarkable men, far more significant than any official details, compose the history of Jesus.

No one who has ever lived has proved to be so truly a public personage as he. And yet the Four Gospels are, to a singular degree, the accounts of a private life. They disclose to us his inmost heart, his most intimate personal relations, his deepest privacy. Most of the occasions on which he appears before us in these histories, are domestic and incidental. We behold him with his personal friends; we listen to him in his conversations with private individuals, in sudden and unlooked-for rencontres with strangers and with opponents, and in his profoundest solitude.

Of almost all other eminent persons, the private portion of their lives is commonplace, having little forcible enough to cause itself to be recorded. We know nothing of them, except in some formal relation to the public, which seldom enables us to know them as they were. We see them only in some public posi-

tion; and in that position so hidden under the robes of office, so disguised and decorated and put upon their best behavior, that we have a misgiving all the time that the real persons are not there. We long to see them in undress, in their private and unguarded moments; or when we chance to see them thus, we find that, when divested of their stars and ribbons, they are stript of their greatness also.

In this respect, the case of the Man of Nazareth is most singular. His very heart is laid bare to us. We are permitted to look in upon his awful solitude, on that last night, when in his mortal agony he was all alone in the Universe with God; and never is he greater.

What a world—what a very heaven of generosity is thrown open to us in him on the night before his execution, when, although the black Cross was so close to him that it covered him with its shadow, he yet lost himself in the generous office of comforting his affrighted and stricken friends, an office for which he received

no return, not even the solacing thought that they appreciated his purpose and position.

By means of these artless narratives, we penetrate the thick gloom of that saddest of all nights, and, transported thither by the magnetism of a common nature, we join that weeping company, Jesus and the Eleven, as they wend their melancholy way, in the dark, to the garden which he loved. It is no wonder that the memory of every other of his many visits to that favorite resort was blotted out in the remembrance of the last. The tender tones of a voice, modulated by the utmost sincerity and the most devoted affection, come to us through the night. Every word and every movement, from the moment when, with his three most intimate friends, he parts from the rest of the disciples, are in thrilling unison with the laws of our common humanity. The solitude and the midnight hour have their natural effect upon him. After the superhuman strength with which, in order to comfort his dismayed followers, he had held aside his own sorrows, there came a natural revulsion, and they rushed upon him with a crushing weight, and literally

prostrated him to the earth. His friends, bewildered by the darkness which had suddenly gathered around all their bright hopes, were utterly helpless to comfort him. The consciousness of his lonely situation fills him with such exceeding anguish that it seemed to him, as he told them, that he should die. But they have no word of consolation for him. Stupefied and exhausted by grief, they fall asleep, and he is left all alone in his agony. But out of that midnight gloom, out of that deadly conflict came the immortal saying, thenceforth the sacred battle-cry of the soul's victory over all mortal sorrows: "*Not my will, but thine, O God, be done!*"

It is precisely this portion of his life that is best fitted to show us just what manner of spirit he was of, which is most minutely told. In what other biography that was ever written, are the retired and most private hours of the subject of it so thrown open to our view? What other human being has ever been shown to us, so exactly as he was, to the very centre of him, in his own isolated personality, cut off from all human supports? What other human

being has been thus probed to the very soul and found to be so thoroughly true, so divinely beautiful?

The more I study these Notices of the Life of Jesus, the more wonderful do they grow. It must be owing to their exceeding simplicity that we have failed to be impressed by their truth. They are as simple as Nature, as simple as Jesus himself. And therefore we have been as unconscious of their intrinsic vitality as we are of the air that we breathe, or of the light which, invisible itself, reveals the beauty of the world; and we find fault with them because they are not what we have ignorantly assumed that they ought to be.

I cannot tell,—I hardly care to know,—when they were written, or by whom. The most complete biographies of the authors of these books could tell me nothing of them that could increase the confidence and respect which the books themselves inspire. How these writings took their present shape is a mystery. I am

inclined to think that originally they appeared not in their present shape but in a fragmentary form. Luke states at the commencement of his gospel that there were *many* accounts of Jesus published, and that, others having undertaken the work, he had determined to attempt it also, as he knew the whole story. It is evident, upon an examination of Luke's gospel, that he made use of accounts previously published, and arranged them according to his idea of their connection, not always putting them in their right places.

But whatever was the origin of these histories, it is clear that they are the works of hands unpractised in the art of writing, and writing with just such indifference to style and effect as must exist where the sense of truth is so absorbing as to leave no room for other motives to act. They are the writings of persons who knew. They are very models of the careless, unguarded freedom of Truth. Minute as they are in their narrations, they constantly leave numerous and important particulars to be inferred. It is true they show themselves to be imbued with the errors and superstitions of

their times. Mixed up with their histories are things fabulous; and to ordinary events is sometimes given the air of miracles. In John's gospel, the writer not only narrates, he discourses. He pauses to explain. And often his style of thought and expression is so prominent as almost to hide all trace of Jesus himself.[1] Nevertheless, all these four books are made up, for the most part, of circumstantial narratives, wrought all over with those marks of truth which, when rightly taken, produce a perfect sense of reality.

Let the enigma then of the origin of these writings remain unsolved and insoluble, their intrinsic character continues the same. Still they show themselves to be inspired writings, full of the inspiration of Nature and Truth. They grew as naturally as any plant, and had the same origin.

It is no decisive proof that certain events

[1] See John i, 1–18; iii, 13–21, 31–36. Traces of the writer are discernible here and there, in ch. v and vi, and in chh. xiv, xv, xvi, and xvii, and elsewhere.

have not happened, because they are imperfectly reported. All that can be affirmed with truth is, that they may be so imperfectly reported that it is impossible to form any distinct idea of them, and therefore they might as well have not happened at all as to any knowledge that we can have of them.

I admit that the New Testament reports are defective. But are they defective to this extent, or in such a manner as to render it impossible to ascertain the truth? I answer,

1. They are not defective through any intention on the part of their authors to falsify; nor

2. Are the facts themselves of a nature difficult to be correctly reported.

But they are defective because they are written without art or care. As the writers are entirely off their guard, their very carelessness being occasioned by their confidence in the reality of what they relate, we may infer the cause from its effects; and their very omissions and mistakes furnish us with the most satisfactory means of determining the truth.

The character of the Four Gospels being such as it is, I affirm that their contents are

true, not although, but because they are imperfect. Supposing the events, which they record, to have actually taken place, are not the Gospels precisely such narratives as ought to have been expected? Who was there among those, conversant with the facts, qualified to give us any other than just such accounts as these? There is a natural accordance between the facts and the probable historians. Any other than just such rude and artless narratives as these would have been entirely out of place. A life, spent as the life of Jesus is represented to have been, among the lowly, could have found its historians only among that class.

Thus artless, the Gospels are not always to be taken to the letter. The writers are not to be understood as if they were upon their oath. When it is stated, for instance, once and again, that '*great multitudes followed Jesus, and that he healed them all*,'[1] the commonest degree of fair-

[1] Matt. xii, 15; xix, 2.

ness forbids us to charge the narrator with intending to say that the multitudes were all suffering. The obvious fact is, that he wrote with the confidence of conscious, or unconscious, truth. Again, when, in the account of the agony of Jesus in the garden, the historian tells us that the only persons who were with Jesus at the time were asleep, and yet informs us of what he said and did on that occasion, it is only common candor to suppose that their slumber was not so unbroken but that one or all were awake long enough to see and hear the little that is related of him.[1]

There are numerous passages of this kind which have given rise to captious objections, only because the popular style and careless structure of the Records have been lost sight of, and a correctness of statement has been looked for, inconsistent with the character of the narrators. These cavils, which seem to me to be unworthy of any intelligent reader, abound in Strauss's Life of Jesus. They are directed at difficulties which may remain unexplained to the end of time, without involving

[1] Matt. xxvi; Mark xiv; Luke xxii.

the essential truth of the facts recorded; difficulties which, it is easy to see, a little more fulness in the narrative would have precluded. Some excuse, however, for the embarrassment they occasion lay-readers, may be found in those false ideas of the Four Gospels, which, representing them as written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have authorized the demand for perfect accuracy, and caused a world of needless trouble.[1]

I SEE that the accounts of Jesus are fragmentary. I concede that they relate only a portion of his history, and that very briefly. The traces of the ignorance and simplicity of their authors are manifest.

And yet, with these drawbacks, I value these writings not only as the most natural and as all that could be expected under the circumstances, but as absolutely the most satisfactory. Al-

[1] And yet, in Heaven's good providence, not wholly needless. It is in the work of clearing away difficulties, that valuable evidences of truth are brought to light.

though they tell us only a portion of his life, it is by far the most important portion. And what is lacking in completeness is made up in effectiveness. What is told is told in a way so truthful that the essential qualities of Jesus are rendered almost visible and palpable. The same absence of art, that renders the Gospels mere sketches, causes these sketches to be far more true to the life, far more full of the spirit of their subject than the most elaborately colored portrait by the practised hand of the most skilful artist. There is no study of effect, no anxiety shown to observe consistency. What they have to tell is shown with the freedom and simplicity of light.

I CANNOT imagine any supposition more entirely needless than that, in the composition of these books, their authors were controlled by a special inspiration. They did not need any such inspiration. The idea that they wrote under the miraculous dictation of the Holy Spirit, and that no confidence can be put in

them unless they were so guided, implies that the facts and teachings, which make up the history of Jesus, were of so uncertain and abstruse a character, that it was beyond the power of human observation, unaided, to report them correctly. Whereas his sayings and works were so simple, so easy of reception, both in their spirit and in their form, that no special provision was required to communicate the knowledge of them to the whole world. They needed no more care than Nature was sure to take. They were like the seeds of the thistle, which are tost to the wind to sow, and the wind sows them.

Thus true to the method of Nature is the manner in which the History of Jesus was planted among mankind. The fowls of the air were on the wing. The ground was stony and thorns abounded. Nevertheless the living seed was cast abroad amidst numerous influences that threatened it with instant destruction. And although much now seems to be lost that he said or did, yet enough has remained to bring forth a hundred fold, and to sow a world with. New as his life was, yet was it so true

to Nature that it came to its own, and could not but live in the memory of mankind. It took root in the world by the necessity of things.

So far from there being any need of the miraculous dictation of the Holy Spirit to communicate it, there was no need even of any human accomplishments to qualify the authors of the Gospels to tell the story truly. The most ordinary natural faculties sufficed. Men without any intellectual culture were abundantly competent, nay, they were the best fitted for the work, if they only had good sight and hearing, and honest minds. Happy is it that the truth of the story was not endangered by any conceit of the pen. Heaven be praised that Jesus lived neither among the rhetoricians of Greece, nor the philosophers of Alexandria! His history is wrapt in no scholastic sophistications. Had it been, what a mass of erudition, beyond the capacity of any German brain, would it have required to extricate it from that subtle web! How small would have been the

hope of getting any considerable part of it out whole! I would as soon have undertaken to decipher the stone Scriptures of Ancient Egypt. What would have been the result had learned men had the writing of the Life of Jesus, we may form some idea, from what happened to Christianity when, in the course of time, it fell among the Platonizing fathers, who, unlike the thieves in the Parable, instead of stripping it bare, left it so crushed under the cumbrous and fanciful garments which they threw over it, that it is no wonder that many have come and looked at it and passed by on the other side, without any recognition of it.

Notwithstanding all that I have suggested to account for the fact that so much of the Life of Jesus has been remembered, when so little was thought of preserving the memory of it at the time, it may still be thought difficult to be accounted for, that we should have as much as we have, and have it told so minutely.

The truth is, with our best endeavors, we can

form but a faint idea of the energy with which the words and works of Jesus wrought upon those who were in personal communication with him. Only think, it went to the extent of changing their personal characters. It drew them away from their old habits of life and made new men of them. Under the influence of the Life of Jesus, they left the little lake of Galilee, where they had toiled from boyhood, catching a daily pittance of fish, and launched boldly out into the great wild sea of the world, where they became fishers of men, casting abroad their nets amidst its foam and din, and gathering in great and fierce nations. The details, through which so commanding an influence wrought on them, must have stamped themselves upon their minds with a vividness, of which, those who have had no similar experience can form only the faintest idea.

THOUGHTS

III

It strikes me as very natural that Jesus should entitle that true spirit of mind which was in his disciples, and which he said would supply his place when he should be taken away from them, "*another Comforter.*" While he was with them, and especially in those last hours of their intercourse, he was their Comforter. When he should be parted from them, the spirit of Truth, which had first led them to him, would remain with them, leading them forever on to still higher truth, interpreting for them all their experience, making plain what was at first inexplicable; this true spirit would be their heaven-sent Comforter and Guide, sup-

plying, and more than supplying, his place. He could not remain with them. It was necessary for their sakes that he should be taken away, for, so long as he remained, their Jewish dreams would beguile them and keep them from ascending to higher hopes. But the true Spirit, that other Comforter, would remain with them forever.

This same Comforter and Teacher is as necessary to us as it was to them. No learning, no culture can compensate for its absence. We cannot advance a step toward the Truth without it.

"I AM *the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet will he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, will never die.*" A physician, who a short time since had been watching with me the last moments of a friend, remarked to me afterwards that, often as he had witnessed death, he had never become familiar with it; that it always impressed him afresh with a sense of mystery. Thus as death, although constantly occurring

and constantly witnessed, never loses its impressiveness, so these lofty words of Jesus, associated as they are with death and burial, never grow commonplace. They always have the sound to me of an unfathomed significance. There is a solemn charm in them which always attracts me. I have a persuasion that they contain the whole secret of our immortality. Never have words come from the lips of man so indefeasibly commanding. There is the ring in them of an unearthly authority,—the utterance of a king.

Were it not so,—if they have not a great meaning, a meaning that goes to the inmost being of us in answer to the instinct of our immortal nature,—in a word, if they are not vital with a great truth, how is it that whole nations and generations listen to them and repeat them with an unbidden reverence, with an involuntary faith? How is it that minds most elevated by culture and philosophy can by no effort make them sound otherwise than authoritative and grand? If they are not profoundly true, what are they then, what can they be but the incoherent ravings of the wildest insanity!

Call to mind the circumstances in which, the person by whom, and the place where, they were uttered. A poor youth, of very humble origin, and of no education apparently, in an obscure part of a remote province of the Roman Empire,—it is such an one, who, surrounded by a few unlettered villagers like himself, addresses these great words to a sister of a friend of his who had just died. Nothing could have been uttered more truly casually, scarcely more privately. There was no preparation made for their utterance, no provision for their publication. The world was not hushed into silence to hear. No host of angels were in waiting, the instant they fell upon the air to take them up and sound them abroad over the whole earth. They were spoken in a small circle of private persons, and in the ordinary tone and course of familiar conversation. And yet they have fallen like drops of flame, and burnt themselves into the heart of the world. And now at every Christian burial these words are repeated. Not an hour passes in which they are not sounded as the coffined remains of mortality are borne to their last repose from luxu-

rious mansions or from the abodes of the poor; in far-off wastes, in the wild mid-ocean. Everywhere, in many tongues, these words are spoken amidst convulsive sobs and streaming tears, and at their sound an air of sanctity fills the place, and the crushing burthen of the sorest bereavement is lightened, and breaking hearts are soothed as by voices from heaven, and visions of the departed and the lamented, living again and transfigured, appear and dispel the gloom.

Discharging for our sorrowing humanity this consolatory office, these words may well claim to be studied, for they must have in them the vital energy of Truth. To suppose that they could possess this power and yet be illusory, the ravings of a madman, as they must be, if they are not true, is to confound all distinctions, and virtually to pronounce Delusion as consolatory as Truth.

I consider this passage as one of the numerous instances in which, in our Common Version, *will* may be substituted for *shall* with great advantage. I cannot but be impressed, in connection with this passage, with the fact that

Jesus, as I understand him, never deals in arbitrary promises and threats. He only asserts facts, the eternal laws of the spirit. I hold it to be of the first importance to a right understanding of his teachings, that this characteristic of his words should be fully apprehended. It is a very simple point; but it affects our whole view of his religion, and shows it to rest on an immovable foundation. The doctrine of his supreme divinity has been so long and so widely prevalent, that, regarding him as the Supreme God, men have naturally understood him as announcing his own sovereign pleasure. Whereas he only asserts *what is*, or *what is to be*, independently of any will or choice of his. Thus, in the passage upon which I am now commenting, I understand him to affirm what is true in the nature of things: 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet *will* he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, *will* never die.' Not arbitrary decrees, but natural consequences are here expressed.

We know nothing of Lazarus but what is contained in the brief statement that he was beloved by Jesus. But what a volume is there

in that! He could have been a person of no common character to stand in such a relation to Jesus. Although it would seem that he had no gifts qualifying him for public action, and that he was of a class seldom known but to a few, yet he must have been a man of no ordinary worth. Those, whom Jesus loved, although they may have had no ability to coöperate with him, and he never summoned them to his aid, must, on this very account, have been possessed of endearing qualities. That Lazarus was susceptible of great strength of affection the result testifies.

One of the inscrutable secrets of our being, which, because it is so common, we overlook, or never adequately appreciate, is the sympathy of mind with mind. Galvanic and magnetic currents are feeble and sluggish in comparison with those spiritual sympathies that make us one. Our life is not contained within our corporeal frames. We live in those we love, and they live in us. The life of our life is in beings external to us, from whom we derive it through our affections. It is a great mystery.

One of these intimate vital unions existed

between Jesus and Lazarus, — no superficial relation, such as the world names friendship. Think only what implicit confidence, what profound veneration Jesus must have inspired. Perfect sincerity, saintly purity, a godlike magnanimity, and a woman's tenderness,—these qualities could have created in the bosom of Lazarus no every-day affection. Think too what a power Truth must have been, coming from such lips! Through his veneration for Jesus, Lazarus must have been made conscious before he died of a life new and deep, since the most vital sentiments of our being were in him so mightily stimulated into activity. And when he fell asleep in death, this deep, strong life of the affections was all there. Through all his illness, with the last wanderings of his mind, when all grew dreamy, I doubt not, the idea of his revered friend flitted perpetually before him.

And did this strong inner life come to an end when the lungs ceased to heave and the pulse to beat? We do not know. We do not know, unless indeed we gather some hint from this great history, what effect death has upon

the immaterial part of us. How difficult is it to bring men to perceive that they really do not know what death is![1] We assume, but without

[1] In order to know what death is, should we not first know what *Life* is, since death is an event or change in the natural history of Life? But "the general notion of *life* is acknowledged by the most profound philosophers to be dim and mysterious up to the present time." "Though Harvey's glory rested upon his having proved the reality of certain mechanical movements and actions in the blood, this discovery, and all other physiological truths, necessarily involved the assumption of some peculiar agency belonging to living things, different both from mechanical agency and from chemical; and in short, something *vital*, and not physical merely. For when it was seen that the pulsation of the heart, its *systole* and *diastole*, caused the circulation of the blood, it might still be asked, what force caused this constantly recurring contraction and expansion?" "We can trace the motions of the animal fluids, as Kepler traced the motions of the planets, but when we seek to render a reason for these motions, like him, we recur to terms of a wide and profound, but mysterious import." (*History of the Inductive Sciences, by W. Whewell.*) Since we are thus confessedly ignorant of the central life of our being, it is assuming more than we know to say positively how it is, or to what extent, this unknown life is affected by death, unless indeed we bring into view the great facts of the life of Jesus bearing upon this point. Then light begins to shine into the mystery.

authority, that it is the instant termination of all life. But we really do not know. The living sympathize with the dead. To the living, the dead are still objects of thought and affection. We do not so positively know that death puts an end to all the life that is in us, that we may not ask: Do not the dead, on the other hand, still sympathize with the living? Are we not present in their thoughts as they are in ours? It may not be affirmed that they do not remember us; and in this passage in the history of Jesus, holding it to be true, I have positive grounds for believing that they do; that the dead are still mysteriously bound to the living, even as the living are bound by the mysterious tie of memory to the dead.

The presence of Jesus at Bethany, during the sickness of his friend, was anxiously looked for. He delayed his visit, however, until the intelligence came to him that Lazarus was dead. As soon as she heard that he was coming and was near at hand, Martha, one of the sisters of the deceased, hastened to meet him. It was when she met him, that the conversation took place in which Jesus gave utter-

ance to the words whose meaning I seek to penetrate. "Then said Martha to Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." By this last remark she may have intended merely to say that, although he had not come to restore her brother to health, she nevertheless still believed that he could do whatever he chose, — receive whatever he asked. But I think she meant more than this, that she designed distantly to hint that, if he so willed, he might even then give back Lazarus to them. But when in reply he declared, in so many words, that her brother would rise again, she is, very naturally, staggered. She could bear to hint distantly herself at the restoration of her brother to life, not fully appreciating the greatness of the thought, or rather, not fully stating it even to her own mind. But when it was presented to her mind by another, in full front, and in no half-light, it was too much for her; she instantly recoiled from the bold idea, and took refuge in a profession of her faith in a final resurrection. "I know," she

rejoined, "that he will rise again in the resurrection, at the last day." Then came the memorable words, immortal as the Spirit of Jesus: "*I am the resurrection and the life: He that trusts in me, though he were dead, yet will he live, and whosoever liveth and trusteth in me, will never die.*" Martha had just expressed the familiar, established idea of a future resurrection, the popularly received doctrine of the day, a resurrection to take place at some indefinite future period. Instantly, in answer to Martha, and in opposition, as I conceive, to the old idea, Jesus asserted the possibility of an immediate, present resurrection, of an instant deliverance from death: "I am the resurrection." 'I have that within me which, now, on the spot, communicates an imperishable life both to the dead and to the living.'

In the rare development of his moral nature, in the fulness of his knowledge of the highest Truth, and his entire identification with it, he was conscious of that powerful life which there is in Truth, and which death cannot touch. Have we never had any experience that gave us a hint, distant indeed, but still a hint of the pro-

found consciousness of life from which Jesus spoke? Have we never had the happiness of having some great truth, some broad principle of Right, impress us so deeply as to create in us a conviction that here was something indestructible—something which was of Eternity? Only let truth which is truth, high and large and beyond all dispute, be once heartily received, let the higher sentiments of our nature be called forth, and we shall have a conviction created in us that we too are in communication, I had almost said in palpable contact, with the Infinite and the Everlasting. A profound sense of Truth is a profound sense of Power, of Life.

Such, I believe, was, not the occasional, but the deep and settled consciousness of Jesus, and hence he had his being in an eternal sphere. *In loving what he loved with such entireness of affection, he loved the imperishable, and his love, which was his life, consciously partook of the immortal nature of its object.* And so full, full to overflowing, was this faith of his, not in a future, but in a present immortality, that, conscious as he was besides of that extraordi-

nary power with which he was by nature endowed, he knew,—he could not help knowing,—that there was an inexhaustible spring of life at hand. He felt it within him.

And that such was the case, I think is clearly shown in the explanation he immediately proceeded to give of the lofty claim which he makes. It was in no mystical sense, but in a way perfectly simple and natural, that he was the resurrection and the life. It was only as he was believed in that he became thus powerful. He explains his meaning: "He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet will live, and whosoever living believes in me, will never die."

We must take care, in reading this passage, to dismiss from our minds all theological definitions of faith. By belief is meant here the reliance of the heart, not an assent of the intellect, but an active sentiment, a profound affection for the Highest and the Holiest.

It is observable that, while Jesus expresses himself in the form of general proposition, and appears to be stating general truths, there must have been in the mind of Martha an immediate

and exclusive application of his words to her dead brother and to herself. Nay, I believe that Jesus himself, when he expressed himself thus, was thinking only of Lazarus, and of Martha to whom he was speaking. Lazarus was, at that moment, the all-engrossing thought of both. In fact, it may be inferred from the very form of his expressions, indefinite, universal, that he spoke from the deep emotion which the occasion was fitted to awaken. When we are greatly moved, nothing is more natural than to give utterance to our excited feelings in terms of universal import. It is the natural language of deep feeling.

Thus, while Jesus, speaking from that transcendent consciousness of life which glowed steadily, like the Vestal fire, in his soul, declared that whoever had faith in him would live, though he were dead, and whoso living believed in him would never die, he had exclusively in mind at the moment his friend recently deceased, and the present living sister of the dead.

And she so understood him, — understood him precisely as if he had said in so many

words: 'Thy brother, who believed in me, though he is dead, yet will live again; and thou, who art living and believing in me, wilt never die. Believest thou this?' Had she taken from his words only the general ideas, which from the general form of his language seem at first sight all that was expressed, she would have had but little difficulty in giving them her direct assent. But it was because she took his words,—as it was so natural for her to do under the circumstances,—in direct application to her buried brother and to herself, that she was again staggered by the startling boldness of his thoughts. Again she falls back upon a general profession of her faith in him. She could honestly say that she believed what he said only by adducing the warrant of her faith in him in a general way: 'Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God that should come into the world.' And, upon this, evidently becoming conscious of her inability to sustain the conversation with him, she retreated and went to summon her sister. It is not stated that Jesus had expressed any desire to see Mary. He may have done so.

But even if he had not, it was very natural that Martha should have retired, as she did, and told Mary that Jesus wanted her. Martha knew how her sister always listened to him with the profoundest interest, and seemed to understand him so much better than she. Mary therefore, she felt, was needed there.

Taking the words of Jesus in the application, which they were originally understood and intended to have, to Lazarus and Martha, I understand Jesus to declare that Lazarus, having passed into that mysterious condition, which we name death, cherishing a confidence in him, which was a confidence in the truth which he represented, was, through that faith, still living. Indeed, Lazarus was so truly and profoundly living, his faith in Jesus was so ardent and deep, that, when Jesus called to him in his grave, Lazarus heard the beloved voice, and was in such deep sympathy with Jesus, that his life returned again to the body.

We insist that we know what death is. But Jesus here, in language most emphatic, declares that this event is so much affected by what he calls faith, that it is death, according to the

common understanding, no more. He asserts the existence of a life in the individual being, which death cannot disturb, a life so deep and strong, that, in the instance of Lazarus, when appealed to or stimulated by that singular and more than magnetic power which Jesus possessed, it could be recalled and made to reanimate the body, even so long after the physical event of death as the fourth day. In fine, the idea of Jesus is, that death is NOT what it is popularly represented to be. It is not the dissolution of the personal being. The personal life is unaffected by it.

We thus have an exposition of the natural law or conditions under which this great fact, the resurrection of Lazarus, occurred.

Thus interpreted, this event, while it illustrates the simple and majestic bearing of Jesus, pours a great light upon the mystery of death, which we may now learn to regard as a mere physical change in the natural history of the human spirit, like birth, growth, and sleep.

Our true life, so the resurrection of Lazarus attests, is not in the material frame but in our moral affections, in that which is the indestruc-

tible germ of the body. It is in that interior being which apprehends the True and the Right, and is capable of loving infinitely and aspiring forever.

We are all born into an imperishable life by virtue of this higher nature, this power of loving the Highest and Best with an ever-growing affection.

But there is a great variety of degrees in the growth and unfolding of the immortal part of us. Some, after dwelling in this visible state for long years, pass away with this immaterial life only in the faintest degree developed. They have never known any strong and inspiring emotion of faith and love,—never had any of the earnestness which is life. Spiritually, they have been still-born. Others again die with the higher nature more or less vigorously active. It has been quickened by Truth. Death is not the same—it cannot be—to both these descriptions of persons. The latter pass away all alive. There is a life in them which

not the most sudden or violent physical change can affect. And just as persons, who go to sleep at night with a great business to be attended to on the morrow on their minds, awake at the right hour, so those who die with high aims at heart, have in themselves the means whereby they revive, and, reviving, *re-collect* themselves. They come to themselves and find their place and understand what has befallen them the sooner and the more completely through this deeper life. Lazarus died with so strong a personal affection that, in some inscrutable way, it held him in sympathy with Jesus, the object of his reverential faith, and kept him still within the reach and influence of his beloved friend.

Death, gentle and gradual as it usually is, nevertheless involves so great a physical change that, unless the life that is in a man is rendered vigorous through faith, such a great revolution in the mode of existence must confound and scatter his dreamy thinking so much as to obliterate from his memory, for a time at least, all the past. His past life, slight and superficial, is as truly lost to him as his infancy was to

his mature years. He has nothing to remember it by. Whereas one who dies with a dear object or friend at heart, passes through the great physical revolution, in which the whole physical organism is broken up, and is able to preserve the continuity of his conscious existence uninterrupted.

Jesus called to Lazarus with a loud voice. Why did he call thus loudly but that he expected Lazarus to hear him? It was no make-believe. So strong was the affection of the dead man for the living, so vital was the union of the two, that the former, sunk though he was in the deep slumber, heard the call of his revered friend, and being still inscrutably present, having still some mysterious relation to his physical frame, which lay resting there, he reanimated that, and came forth. Lazarus was as dead as one could be, who was so full of life as he. As men differ, while living, in degrees of life, they differ also, when dead, in degrees of death. May it not be that, as the voice of Jesus was potent enough to recall Lazarus, many of the departed hereafter may be awakened from death through the sympathies bind-

ing them to the loved ones who have gone before them into another condition of being? It is pleasant to think it.

It looks very much,—such is human nature,—as if Martha hastened on this memorable occasion to go and meet Jesus without letting Mary know that he was coming, in order to gain over her sister the little advantage of seeing him first. She must have known how glad Mary would have been to hear that he was coming at last, and to accompany her. But, from the jealousy she betrayed of Mary on a previous occasion,[1] I cannot help suspecting that she felt that Mary was nearer to Jesus than she, and that if Mary were there, she herself would be thrown in the background. So, naturally, without being perhaps distinctly conscious of the small feeling that alloyed her motive in going to meet him so promptly, she pleased herself with the idea that she would see him and speak with him first, and have him,

[1] Luke x, 40.

for a little while at least, all to herself. This state of mind was only too natural in one who, like Martha, had, upon one occasion, been so annoyed at seeing Mary seated, doing nothing, only listening to Jesus,—when she herself was so busy, providing for the entertainment of their guest,—that she actually complained to him of her sister, and met with a mortifying reproof.

If any little feeling, of the kind which I suppose, had place in Martha's heart, she was punished for it, as we always are for similar littlenesses, by being made to feel that it had betrayed her into a position in which she could not sustain herself. When she met Jesus, she was not equal to conversing with him. Everything he said embarrassed her. And she was forced to withdraw, and go and tell Mary that she was wanted. She was compelled virtually to confess that Mary would understand him better, and ought to be there.

How glad Mary would have been to lose not a moment in going to meet him, we may infer from the fact that, as soon as Martha told her he was come, "*she rose up quickly*," and went

to him. Her eagerness to see him was so marked that her haste is twice alluded to.

If I have rightly interpreted the state of Martha's mind, then we may see also how natural it was that she should have called Mary *secretly*. She retired from the presence of Jesus with a feeling of self-dissatisfaction,—crestfallen. Perhaps her mind misgave her that she had not treated her sister generously. She had been made to feel painfully her inability to talk with Jesus. Instead of being comforted by him, she had only been confounded. Consequently, there was no elation of spirit, no loud announcing of his approach. She merely whispers the tidings to her sister, and thus betrays the chagrin she meant to conceal.

Possibly I scrutinize her too curiously. But I have no thought of disparaging Martha. The weakness, thus undesignedly disclosed in her, is so common and so natural that, in provoking a smile of sympathizing recognition, and this is

all the effect it has in derogation of her, it only renders the reality of her being the more vivid, and brings her near to us as a sister.

It may be that the only reason why Martha whispered to Mary of the coming of Jesus is to be found in the presence of the friends from the city who were seated with Mary, condoling with her, and who may not have been well affected toward Jesus.

I HAVE said that Jesus wrought these wonderful effects, styled miracles, never for the sake of proving his power, or attesting his authority, but simply as he was prompted by an impulse of humanity.

But the restoration of Lazarus, the most striking of these acts, has some appearance of being an exception to this remark. The account tells us that, after Jesus had heard that Lazarus was sick, he forbore to go to Bethany, and that he did not go there, until he knew that his friend was dead, and that then he told his disciples he was glad for their sakes he was

not there, in order that they might believe. And just before he called Lazarus forth, he gave expression to his thankfulness for the opportunity granted him to impress the minds of the people.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, I find no inconsistency here with his usual course of proceeding. It certainly was not merely for the opportunity of raising a dead man to life that he thanked God. But what he was grateful for was, that, in the providence of Heaven, an occasion had arisen, when he could worthily use his singular power, not for the display of that power, but for a far higher end,—to manifest the life-giving power of faith. His predominant motive in restoring Lazarus was personal friendship for him and for his sisters. Out of love for them he recalled his friend to life. And what he thanked God for was, that circumstances were such, that one had fallen asleep in death between whom and himself those sympathies existed that enabled him to demonstrate the power of faith and love. Unquestionably he was glad of every opportunity of that sort.

It is striking to see how he could perceive that what he did was fitted to cause the greatest excitement, and yet do it nevertheless with entire singleness of aim and an unconstrained dignity of manner. Never, to my eyes, does the form of Jesus so dilate with a majestic simplicity as at the grave of Lazarus.

Individuals, devoted like Jesus to the great work of Reform, are so apt to esteem others according to the interest which they take in what interests them, that the friendship of Jesus for the family at Bethany becomes a beautiful trait in his history. Lazarus, I suppose, had no apostolic qualifications. He was not fitted for any public labor, a true, silent, private man. Never man was devoted as Jesus was to his work, and yet he saw worth in those who took no part in it. He had friends, not partisans.

Living as we do upon the surface, blinded as we are by the god of Mechanism, whom the

age worships and the demonstrations of whose power, it must be confessed, are imposing enough to deceive the very elect and to destroy all faith in the spirit, we have come to have the feeblest apprehensions of the intrinsic and victorious energy of a strong conviction of mind; or we should not find it so difficult as we do to understand the power which Jesus ascribed to faith when he declared that it delivers both the dead and the living from death. We mistake opinions, fancies, dreams, for convictions of truth. Opinions, fancies, are the thinnest vapors floating afar in the cold upper atmosphere of the soul. But Faith is an internal, creative force. It melts. It crystallizes. It strings nerves, vitalizes blood. It draws the power of Almighty God down into human sinews and muscles. It electrifies and animates. It is the Divine *Logos*, working forever through the human soul, re-creating the world.

The commentators do not know how to account for the omission by the first three Gos-

pels of all mention of this greatest of the acts of Jesus, the resurrection of Lazarus. Neither do I. But what then? John's account is stamped with the indelible impress of Truth. And that should suffice us. I cannot explain the omission. But I can readily believe there was a reason for it, without supposing the reason to be, that the story was not true. Its truth is impressed upon its face.[1]

The decisive marks of truth, evident in the narrative of the restoration of Lazarus, are briefly these:

1. The perfect and obviously unintentional consistency with which the characters of Martha and Mary are preserved.

2. The representation of Jesus in the novel act of raising a dead man to life, which he does,

[1] The common supposition is, that Lazarus being alive when the first three Gospels were written, they omitted to mention his resurrection, "lest the Jews, who had consulted to put him to death, should assassinate him. When St. John wrote, it is probable that he was dead, and therefore he gave a particular account of that resurrection."

not only without loss of personal dignity, without being belittled as he would be, were the account a fabrication, but in a way so becoming as to increase greatly our sense of his personal greatness.

3. The direction of Jesus to the bystanders to go to the help of Lazarus, which undesignedly discloses precisely that state of mind in them which the appearance of the dead man alive must have produced.

4. The honesty of the narrator in intimating that upon some present the wonder made no impression. And,

5. Lastly and chiefly, the intrinsic harmony of the great fact with the highest laws of our being. But the force of this, the strongest evidence of its truth, will be felt only by those who accept the representation of it which I have given.

Great stress is always laid upon the title, 'Son of God,' in its application to Jesus, as significant of something peculiar, something

distinguishing him from men as a being of a different and superior nature. But it is worthy of remark that, in the very first passage in the New Testament in which this title occurs, it is used as synonymous with 'Man.'[1] "If thou be the *Son of God*, command that these stones be made bread," said the tempter. Jesus replies, "It is written, *Man* shall not live by bread alone;" Son of God and man being employed as convertible terms.

And verily man is the Son of God, not although but because he is man. Jesus, in whom a glorious development of humanity is witnessed, is, emphatically, on this account, because so truly a man, the Son of God.

Some things in the New Testament narratives, which appear to be miraculous, owe this appearance entirely to the translators. We have only to vary the phrase as we may without affecting the meaning of the original, and the miracle vanishes. Instances in point are af-

[1] Matt. iv, 3.

forded by those passages in which Jesus is represented as '*knowing*' the thoughts of those around him.[1] In every case in which we so read, the original sense is that Jesus saw or perceived what was passing in their thoughts, —saw it, where it was visible enough, in their faces. It could not have been difficult for any person of ordinary penetration, certainly not for one so keen-sighted as Jesus, to divine the thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees, when he performed some work that drew forth the acclamations of the people. Who that had eyes could fail to see their jealousy and their rage, through the affected looks of pious horror which they exchanged when he healed the sick on the Sabbath! It shows a very imperfect sense of the greatness of Jesus to suppose that he never did or said the most common things without special and supernatural aid.

Other things, again, are represented by the original writers as miraculous which were not

[1] Matt. xii, 25; ix, 4; Luke vi, 8; xi, 17.

so; which is as it should be. For what could be more truly in keeping with the whole history than that, when so many really extraordinary events were taking place, things ordinary should be mistaken and exaggerated. The account of the birth of Jesus, for instance, is just such a fable as was to have been expected, when it is remembered how wonderful his life was. The more extravagant the stories told of his birth, only the stronger is the presumption that he could have been no common person, for whose existence such an account was alone thought worthy.

A very striking example of the disposition to magnify the ordinary into the extraordinary, a diposition which the exciting experience of the disciples was powerfully fitted to produce, is the story of the transfiguration of the person of Jesus, which arose, as I have endeavored elsewhere to show, out of a vivid dream of Peter's.[1]

[1] I beg leave to refer the reader again to a former volume, '*Jesus and his Biographers.*' To the explanation there given I have nothing to add, except to suggest the great probability that the dream of Peter was caused by thunder and lightning accompanying the cloud, which, it is related, came

It is curious to observe how satisfactorily all the circumstances mentioned in the narratives of this incident, are explained,—how they all fall into place upon this supposition. This mode

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up on that occasion. We know that dreams, quite long and circumstantial, oftentimes occupy an inappreciable space of time. Electricity is only a very inadequate symbol of the rapidity of thought under certain circumstances. Individuals, who have been suddenly thrown into situations of extreme danger, report nothing as more remarkable in such an experience than the instantaneousness with which a multitude of thoughts pass with great distinctness before the mind. The same thing is often observable in dreams. A noise that awakens us produces often a vivid dream. A clap of thunder accounts for the story of the transfiguration in a way perfectly natural. The incidents of that event, as they are told, are all coincident. "A singular fact has often been observed in dreams which are excited by a noise; namely, that the same sound awakens the person and produces a dream which appears to him to occupy a considerable time. The following example of this has been related to me. A gentleman dreamed that he had been enlisted as a soldier, joined his regiment, deserted, was apprehended, carried back, tried, condemned to be shot, and at last led out for execution. After all the usual preparations, a gun was fired, he awoke with the report, and found that a noise in an adjoining room had both produced the dream and awaked him."—(*Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers, &c., by J. Abercrombie, M.D.*)

of understanding the story of the transfiguration, establishes much more important things than it explains away. It requires not only the actual existence of the actors in the scene, and their presence on the spot, but also that exciting events must have previously taken place, in order to induce the state of mind which disposed Peter to dream such a dream, and his fellow disciples instantly to fall in with his impression that it was all real.

It is a groundless fear that the discovery of mistakes in these histories, tends to undermine the credibility of the whole. I cannot perceive the reasonableness of any such inferences; especially when it so plainly appears that the errors discovered could not possibly have had an existence, if the history were not substantially true. They are the shadows caused by the light, and could not possibly have existed without it.

"Do the duty which lies nearest to thee, and a new light will rise for thee upon the doing of all things whatsoever." "Doubt can be re-

lieved only by action." What are these sayings of modern wisdom, but different versions of the thought of Jesus: 'If any man will do His will, he will know of my teaching, whether I am true or false.'[1] We must act in order to know.

This great principle Jesus did not content himself with asserting only once. What was that memorable declaration to Pilate, "Every one who is of the truth, heareth my voice,"[2] but the same saying, namely, that the true man distinguishes the Truth, and only the true man? Again, when the people murmured at his words, he virtually said to them, 'It is of no use; you cannot understand me unless you listen in the same spirit in which I speak;'[3] or that other saying: 'Wisdom is justified of her children,'[4]—what does it mean but that only the wise perceive wisdom in its different manifestations, only the true understand Truth?

It is this most singular clearness of vision with which he saw that, let truth be stated with the utmost plainness, only the doer can be the knower, only the honest can distinguish the

[1] John vii, 17. [2] John xviii, 37.
[3] John vi, 43, 44. [4] Luke vii, 35.

truth, that creates in me a sense of his profound wisdom. Truly was it said of him that he understood human nature, that he knew men.[1]

It was his distinct perception of the fact that men come to know the truth only by being it, that rendered him insensible to every temptation to intolerance. He knew that he was in the right, and that those who opposed him were in the wrong, yet no teacher that the world has ever had ever paid such implicit deference to the reason and conscience of mankind. And he was pre-eminent in this respect, because he read it in the nature of man, that truth can no more be forced upon minds averse to it than a plant can be drawn from the seed by mechanical means. Accordingly he paid uniform respect to man's native sense of the true and the right. He invariably addressed himself to that tribunal, and when, corrupted by passion or self-interest, it rejected his appeal, he resorted to no other means of producing conviction. He used neither bribe nor threat, nor any force but the force of truth. On that alone he relied.

This is one of the traits in him which im-

[1] John ii, 24, 25.

press me with the idea that he was a man of wonderful illumination of mind, immeasurably too enlightened to have taught the narrow errors which Mr. Parker ascribes to him. Through the brief and imperfect reports of his sayings, instead of discerning traces of political designs, I get glimpses of a mind singularly large and elevated.

It is sometimes asked, with a childish ignorance of human nature, why, if he possessed the extraordinary power attributed to him, he did not descend from the Cross in answer to the taunts of his enemies, and so silence and convince them. To say nothing of the effect which such a proceeding would have had in destroying the illustration which his death gives of a self-sacrificing devotion to Truth, what reason is there to suppose that those who, rather than believe in him, had ascribed the instantaneous cures which he had wrought to the agency of evil spirits, would have hesitated to ascribe his descent from the Cross, had such descent taken

place, to the same bad agency? What evidence is there, that Truth may present, so strong that depraved minds will not pervert it? Do we not daily see truths, which voices from heaven could not render more plain, flatly rejected by those who have some interest to serve, some passion to gratify by rejecting them? Why, the great sun in heaven is hidden from a man when his little pride is in the way. When unbelief has become chronic, a second nature, you must regenerate the individual before you can expect any argument to convince, or any evidence to be appreciated.

On the other hand, where there is the least ingenuousness, Truth is received into the mind upon the slightest hint. It cannot touch the hem of her garment without feeling it through and through. The sense of truth, when once excited into action, grows steadily more and more keen. This is plainly seen in the personal friends of Jesus. Uneducated, and partaking largely, as men of their class must have done, in the prejudices of their time and country, they nevertheless had a childlike openness of disposition that rendered them susceptible of

the Truth speaking from the lips and beaming from the looks of Jesus. They were of that temper for which Truth has a strong affinity. They were growing constantly in the knowledge of it, although they never wholly outgrew their Jewish ideas.

When has our frail human nature ever been so highly honored as it was by the confidence which Jesus reposed in it? One of the loftiest traits of his character is the faith, with which, always, even in the darkest hour, he committed himself to all good men and true,—to whatever of goodness and truth there was in the world. He believed in the existence of goodness and truth, although he had so little reason. His virtual appeal to "every one that is of the truth," when he stood before the Roman Governor, and when there was not a soul in all the crowd true and courageous enough to speak a word in his behalf, strikes me as hardly less than sublime.

In order fully to appreciate the moral courage of Jesus, just think, (and we need not go far for

aid to our thoughts,) what a reign of terror is always established by Falsehood and Wrong, when they have once become established by custom and law. Then the perversion of the public and private conscience is extreme. The clear-sighted become stone-blind to truths plainer than the sun; and the boldest tremble at the least thought of resistance. It was against such a terrible despotism that the young Man of Nazareth stood forth fearlessly and alone. Not for a moment was it doubtful what his position was in relation to the monstrous abuses of his time. Against him, the respectability, learning, wealth, and religion of his country were arrayed. He kept no terms with them. He laid bare the corruption of the popular religious character of the day in burning words, indifferent to the deadly hatred which he excited in the ruling class, and as careless of their machinations as of the dust on which he trod.

THERE is hardly any incident in his history that has occasioned more embarrassment than *the cursing of the barren fig-tree.*

Were it a pure fiction, it is a matter of wonder that the author or authors of the fable, while they were about it, did not represent Jesus as causing figs instantly to appear on the tree.

If, as I have endeavored to show, Jesus produced the wonderful effects ascribed to him by means of a peculiar gift that was native to him, inseparable from his nature, then it follows that he could not possibly give expression to this rare vital energy, without its having its necessary effect. If, in an unguarded moment, he gave utterance to a sudden volition, the thing that he willed had to take place. The effect had to follow the cause. Thus when, as he was travelling, he became hungry, and, seeing a fig-tree in the distance and upon reaching it, finding no fruit thereon, was so disappointed as to vent his vexation in an imprecation on the tree, the tree was, as a natural and inevitable consequence, just as certain to be destroyed as by another man's axe when struck by it. Such was the essential energy of his will. It could not be expressed without producing its effect. It was as if the tree had received a blow, or had

been struck by lightning. It must needs wither away.

The incident being admitted as a fact, such is the explanation of it which is, not merely suggested, but necessitated by the view which I have given of the so-called miracles of Jesus.

The two accounts of this occurrence vary very considerably. Their variations, however, so far from being any evidence that the story is not true, furnish a presumption to the contrary. Fables, intended to be received as facts, are usually told pretty much in only one way. They cannot afford to bear the weight of contradictions and discrepancies.

Matthew relates that when Jesus found no fruit on the tree he exclaimed: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever!" Mark says that Jesus said, "No man shall eat fruit of thee hereafter forever!" Matthew gives us to understand that the fig-tree withered away instantly. Mark's account is, that it was not until the next day that the disciples of Jesus saw that it "was dried up from the root."[1]

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[1] Matt. xxi, 19, 20; Mark xi, 12–14, 20, 21.

Whichever of these exclamations we accept as the words of Jesus, we should hardly infer from them that he expressed himself passionately. Especially, accustomed as we are to read the New Testament with no accompanying exercise of the imagination, we should be slow to call his language on this occasion, a *curse*. Yet so it sounded, and was spoken of by those who heard him. "Master," said Peter to him, "behold! the fig-tree that thou *cursedst* is withered away." As a curse then, prompted at the moment by disappointed hunger, the language, in which he gave utterance to his vexation, could not have been spoken with calmness. It is neither natural nor in accordance with his character, that he should have cursed the tree in cold blood.

There was no harm done, since the tree was barren, as appeared from the fact that there was no unripe fruit on it. The season of figs had not come. If they had been in season then, it would have been possible that the tree had borne fruit, but that it had all been gathered.

The good that resulted from the act was indirect, and at the moment, I suppose, not in-

tended. It consisted in the striking instance it afforded of the power of faith. Such was the use Jesus made of the incident. He taught, and the fate of the tree reiterated the lesson, that a man can do whatever he believes that he can do. An unquestionable truth. Whatever he *believes*. But then it must be belief, not fancy, not opinion, not delusion. Faith cannot exist without a foundation. A man can do whatever he believes that he can do. True, because, in the nature of things, a man cannot, properly speaking, believe in his ability to do a thing unless he possesses the ability. The power, dwelling in us and making itself known to us through our consciousness, involuntarily as it were and unconsciously creates in us the faith essential to its development.

Whether Jesus knew, or took into consideration beforehand, what would be the effect of the curse which he pronounced upon the tree, or whether the imprecation was only the ejaculation of his disappointment at finding no fruit, I cannot tell. I think the latter was the case; he spoke hastily. And if it were so, then this incident gives us a vivid impression of the for-

bearance which he habitually exercised in the use of his singular power. If weakness is shown here, so is strength, and far more impressively. It is grand to think that, although there was a power in him that could uproot mountains, he was yet so exalted above every thought of using it for his pride or passion, that only once, when he was vexed at finding no fruit on a fig-tree, was he betrayed into a hasty and passionate exertion of his mighty will. He becomes even more wonderful for his forgetfulness of his great power than for his exercise of it.

This explanation of the withering of the fig-tree throws light upon other passages which relate how Jesus wrought upon inanimate matter. Let it be borne in mind that in the opinion of some of the wisest philosophers, matter, in the last analysis, will be found reducible to *points of force.* But force is the attribute or distinctive property of mind, not of matter as popularly defined. There is then the relation of one and the same nature between matter and mind. Through this occult relation the

will of Jesus operated to produce the effects which he wrought on inanimate objects.

CERTAIN very scrupulous persons once inquired of Jesus why his disciples disregarded the traditions of the elders by omitting to wash their hands before eating.

He answered this question by asking another. And the question he asked shows as strikingly as anything else in his history how far beyond, not only his day but ours, his religious idea was. "*Why do ye also*," he demanded, "*transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*"

It appears that the veneration of the Jews for their temple and its ceremonies was so ex-

cessive that their leading men considered the duty to that more important than the duty of children to their aged parents; and they taught accordingly. A monstrous perversion. We can hardly suppose it possible. The savage tribes, among whom children are authorized to destroy their parents when old age threatens them, are not so depraved. For their motive is to relieve the aged from sufferings, for which, in their rude way of life, they can provide no other alleviation.

Gross and almost incredible as this perversion of feeling among the Jews appears, I nevertheless think it indicates no ordinary strength of mind in Jesus that he saw through it and exposed its falsehood. For, profess as we may to look upon those ancient Jews with contempt for their blindness, the very same monstrous corruption of feeling is manifested now in full force and in the most enlightened communities; there is the same tenderness for artificial forms, the same disposition to uphold them at the cost of the most sacred duties. At this hour, so excessive is the reverence of the people of this country for the edifice of their

Civil Union, (no temple of Religion,) that, for the sake of it, laws are passed absolving us from the obligations of common humanity! As distinctly as God, speaking by the voice of Nature, hath commanded us to honor our parents, so also hath he said, without any qualifying clause: "Do to others as ye would have them do to you." "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "Let the oppressed go free." But this nation says, 'Whosoever shall say to his brother-man or sister-woman: It is a gift, consecrated to the maintenance of the Union and Constitution, by whatsoever thou mayst be profited by me, he shall be free, free from the obligation to deal justly with his fellow-men, free to buy and sell and hunt them at his pleasure.' Thus are the sacred dictates of Nature, the holy commandments of the great God, made of none effect by our political traditions, the enactments of men being maintained by the educated and the religious as the highest law. The moral sense of the Man of Nazareth was manifestly in advance, not only of his own day, but of our blazing nineteenth century noontide.

Numbers there are, whose moral perceptions, from one cause or another, are so confused that they are at a loss to decide to which they owe their allegiance, the commandments of God written in the heart, or the political traditions of the fathers, inscribed by frail hands on perishable parchment and paper. If they, who are thus unable to decide between the two, were to pray for a revelation from heaven to enlighten them, I can imagine no lesson which they could receive or desire more directly to the purpose than this most pertinent incident in the Life of Jesus.

I HAVE said that the closing hours of this wonderful Life are the only portion of it, of which we have in the Gospels a history that approaches to a regular narrative. And the reason of it is the extraordinary personal greatness by which those closing hours are glorified. At every step the person of Jesus glows with some new manifestation of moral beauty more

resplendent than the last, and yet all is as natural and unforced as the morning light.

If his simple history had not been so distorted by superstition, and if, in the reading of the New Testament, the imaginative faculty, which is in us all, were not entirely paralyzed, if it were excited into the slightest activity, it would be scarcely possible to read the last few pages of his life aloud. The voice would break into sobs of unutterable admiration and pity. No triumphal procession, glancing at every step with the spoils of kings and with the banners of victory, no coronation pomp, no august religious ceremonial, no jubilant Te Deum, no wailing Miserere could symbolize the grandeur and the pathos of that series of events, which, beginning in the garden of Gethsemane, terminates in that other garden near the hill of the Crucifixion.

Behold him emerging from the deep shadows of the trees. The torches of the armed band, come to arrest him, flash upon his erect form

and his calm pale countenance, as, suddenly advancing towards them, he asks whom they are seeking. And when, upon their saying, Jesus of Nazareth, he replies, 'I am he,' who wonders as he reads that, at that unlooked-for apparition, at the sound of that commanding voice, which no fear made tremulous, the armed men were brought to so sudden a halt, and thrown into such confusion, that some of them, borne backward, were thrown down. Coming to arrest a man rumored to possess strange powers, and coming in the night, they were doubtless huddled very close together; and were naturally enough seized with a temporary panic, when the person whom they had come out to apprehend with arms and in numbers, thus suddenly presented himself before them.

And then observe how instant is his consideration for his disciples. "If you want me, let these go their way." And is there not a natural tone of contempt, almost of bitterness, in the language which he addresses to his captors?

"Do you come out against me with swords and clubs as against a thief? In the daytime when I was in the Temple, within your reach, you did not dare to touch me. You have chosen your fitting time, the hour of darkness."[1] Such appears to be the purport of his words. It is right that he should have thus evinced a sense of the indignity with which he was treated.

Follow him when he is led bound into the presence of the High Priest, and there again witness the divine temper of this wonderful man. With the grossest injustice that dignitary would fain have made Jesus his own accuser. But to the questions which the High Priest put to him, Jesus replied: 'I have spoken openly before the world. I have always taught in the synagogue and the temple, whither the Jews all resort, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you inquire of me? Ask those who have heard me. They know what I

[1] Luke xxii, 52, 53.

have said.' This language of simple truth, so directly to the purpose, unanswerable, and fitted to make the High Priest look very foolish, some ignorant partisan of his, standing by, knew no better than to understand as an insult to his master, and to resent by striking Jesus with the palm of his hand, in plain words, by slapping him in the face, exclaiming at the same time, 'Is that the way you answer the High Priest?'[1] I see the blood, stirred by the blow, mantling the cheek. I see those clear eyes turned full upon the man, while to this brutal treatment are returned the immortal words, "If I have spoken falsely, declare it; if truly, why do you strike me?"

When Jesus is arraigned before the Roman Procurator, the contrast is so striking between the restless, boastful, and cowardly judge and the self-possession of the prisoner, that the relation is reversed, and it is the judge who is con-

[1] John xviii, 22.

demned and the prisoner who passes sentence. We should infer from the opposite characters of the two that the looks, the demeanor of Jesus, overawed the weak mind of Pilate, even if the history did not intimate as much. I gather from the account that the Governor was under a species of fascination. Had the prisoner been any ordinary individual, Pilate would have dispatched the case very soon, with very little compunction. But he evidently did not know what to make of Jesus. The dignified silence he maintained was a mystery to the magistrate, who seems to have been impelled, hardly knowing why, to make repeated efforts to save him from the fate to which the priests were clamoring to consign him.

"Are you a king then?" asks Pilate. "Yes," he replies, "I am a king." His whole air attests his inborn royalty. Had the blood of a long line of kingly ancestry filled his veins, he could not have borne himself more regally. "For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world to be a witness of the truth, and every true man listens to my voice." A king indeed, reigning over all true men,

acknowledged as a sovereign by all whom Truth makes free, wielding a sceptre never to be broken. He stood there utterly forsaken by every earthly friend; but he could not be unkinged. Unkinged! It was his coronation day. His own blood was the oil of consecration, and a vile cross was the throne prepared for him, from which he was to rule the ages. The consciousness of being then and there a martyr to the Truth, to reign forever by divine right in every true soul, was the token of his prerogative, more significant than any crown of gold. Alone, misunderstood, surrounded by savage men, thirsting for his life, amidst that horrid din and with that grim death before him, not for an instant does he lose his generous faith in good men and true. He still leans with perfect dignity upon all loyal hearts. This is kingly.

To observe how true it is, as I have said, that at every step of the way from the Garden to Golgotha, in every attitude of Jesus, whether standing arraigned as a criminal or staggering

under the weight of the cross, or hanging on that horrid instrument of death, a new illumination of truth and greatness transfigures his person, we have only to recall his words to the women who followed him weeping: "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, weep for yourselves and your children,*" and that prayer of forgiveness which floats forever on the atmosphere of the world like the music of an ascending angel: "*Father! forgive them! they know not what they are doing!*" I believe this ejaculation burst from his agonized lips just as they were nailing him to the Cross, and that it had reference to the ignorant brutal men who were inflicting upon him that torture.

On one occasion, as we read, he forgot his mother. It was when, excited and shocked by the incorrigible perversity of certain Pharisees who had charged him with being in league with evil spirits, he was wholly absorbed in what he was saying, as the strength of his language shows, and some one most impertinently

interrupted him, telling him that his mother was there wanting to speak to him. For a moment he speaks as if he had forgotten the most sacred of all human relations, as if his mother were a stranger to him. His forgetfulness of his mother on this occasion was, however, in the very spirit of his own declaration, "*Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.*" These words which he addressed to his disciples, Truth addressed to him.

But although his ardent devotion to the truth made him momentarily forgetful of his mother, no extremity of physical torture could have the same effect. After he was hung upon the Cross, in the gasping agony of that position, he caught sight of his mother, standing near with his dearest friend, and when life is rapidly ebbing away, and he is only able to utter an ejaculation at intervals, in brief, broken words he commends her to the care of his friend: "*Woman! lo! thy son!*" he called to her, and to John, "*Lo! thy mother!*" Though able, chiefly from the torture, but in part perhaps from filial emotion, only to articulate a

word or two at a time, he was understood, and John ever afterwards cherished Mary as his mother. When Jesus was most human, then was he most divine.

Reading the New Testament, as we are all in the habit of doing, mechanically, with so little accompanying aid of the imagination, we seldom represent to ourselves what must have been the power of the personal presence of Jesus, of his voice, of the expression of his face, of his eye. As the mind shows itself through the body, he must have been pre-eminent in the highest kind of beauty, the beauty that is found not in the visible features, but which, indefinable, shines through these with infinite variety and with a power penetrating to the soul whence it comes. His inner being was all aflame with Truth and Love. These beamed through his eyes and played through every lineament of his countenance, and poured their thrilling music through the intonations of his voice, and gave unconscious

grace and dignity to his whole bearing. I can readily understand how he must have taken the hearts of all ingenuous persons who saw and heard him. Looks and tones expressive of sincerity have a captivation which not even the hardest can resist.

Does the wish sometimes rise within me that I could have seen that face which expressed the very love of God, that I could have heard that voice, every tone of which must have been full of a thrilling sensibility? And yet had I lived in those days, what could have saved me from those prejudices which blinded so many to the fascination of his presence, and made them deaf to the music of that voice? Rather let me pray for the pure heart and the single eye that will enable me to discern the same beauty of God in the features of living men, and to catch tones of the same ravishing sweetness of Heaven, in voices now speaking in the world.

I WONDER how often readers of the New Testament represent to themselves with any

distinctness the great difference between the estimation in which Jesus is held now and the way in which he was looked upon when he was living and travelling about in Galilee and Judea. Now his name is so sacred that, like the name of the Highest, it is accounted profane to utter it with levity; so profound is the universal sense of the sanctity of the Man of Nazareth. But then, when he was living, no religious associations had gathered around the new and, to all but Jewish ears, barbarous name of Jesus. Spoken of by the respectable and pious as a blasphemous person, fond of wine, an associate of the worst characters, an unprincipled demagogue aiming to stir up the people to treason, he represented the very reverse of all that is worthy and religious. To numbers of good people, good as the world went, he was an object of aversion and horror. To have said then that he was a pious man, would have been considered as convicting oneself of impiety. Piety! that was the attribute of the good orthodox people of those days, the Pharisees. To the many, Jesus was worse then

than an Abolitionist is now in the eyes of Southern planters.

THE name of Christ has now everywhere become such a mere word, that no slight effort is required to understand what a power it was when it was a new name, full of significance, standing for ideas that stirred up the very deeps of the soul. Whoever, in the days of the Apostles, spoke that name aloud, with respect, instantly aroused and concentrated on himself the fiercest hatred. It turned natural affection into bitterness. And therefore it was that Jesus, whose experience enabled him to foresee that state of things, told his friends that they must be prepared to suffer to the uttermost on account of his name.

But there is another use of his name which is not so readily understood. He bade his disciples pray *in his name*, assuring them that whatever they should ask *in his name* they would receive.

It has been inferred from this language that

he represented himself as so powerful that what the Eternal Father would not give out of his own goodness, He would give out of consideration for Christ, that his name would be an indorsement of prayer insuring its acceptance. There is not the slightest necessity of drawing any such inferences from the passages referred to.

While the mere sound of his name excited his enemies to madness and bloodshed, to his friends it was a sound all alive with the most inspiring ideas. It suggested the best thoughts. It created the profoundest emotions. His name thus became a spirit. It was identical with all the truth and power which Jesus himself represented. So that, when he told his friends they would receive whatever they should ask *in his name*, so far from intending to represent himself as so powerful that, no matter what they prayed for, they would receive it if they only connected his name with the prayer, he evidently limits the promise to *such things only as should be asked for in that spirit which his name then expressed and inspired.*

It is worthy of note that, while it is expressly stated in the gospel of John that the things contained therein were written to prove Jesus to be the Messiah,[1] no allusion is made in this Gospel to that most emphatic assertion of his claim to the title, which the other Gospels tell us he made to the High Priest.[2]

The Gospels are all obscure and unsatisfactory in regard to the Messiahship of Jesus. He himself continually spoke of the Christ in the third person. He did not say, the Christ has come; but the burthen of his teaching was, the kingdom is coming. "When the Son of Man cometh," he asked on one occasion, "will he find faith on the earth?" i. e., 'When the Messiah comes, will he find people prepared to believe in him?' At the same time he calls himself the *Son of Man*. But this was not a title belonging exclusively to the Messiah. Only on two or three occasions is he recorded

[1] John xx, 31.

[2] Matt. xxvi, 64; Mark xiv, 62; Luke xxii, 70.

to have avowed himself to be the person whom his countrymen were expecting.[1]

Some interesting questions arise. On what grounds was the Jewish expectation of a Messiah based? Was it prompted by a certain unerring instinct, looking always for the highest good to come through man, the highest created being that we know? The ancient prophecies, which were believed to justify this expectation, are very obscure and indefinite, and have their origin, so far as they are prophecies at all, in the same instinct. The existence, however, of

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[1] While he is represented in one passage by Matthew (ch. vii, 22, 23) as speaking in the character of the Messiah, and saying, "Many will say to *me* in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name," &c. Luke, in his account of what appears to be the same language (ch. xiii, 25–28), represents him as speaking in the third person: "When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and *he* shall answer and say unto you," &c. As the writers of the Gospels held him to be the Messiah, it is easier to see how, when he spoke in the third person, he should be reported as speaking in the first than the reverse.

this expectation, and beyond the borders of Judea, is, I believe, unquestioned.

Did this hope, in the hidden nature of things, work to its own fulfilment? And was the physical organization, the whole nature of the Man of Nazareth, fashioned and informed by this great hope which, as the central life of the nation, poured its inspiration into the lowliest private heart,—into the soul of Mary? Who can tell the influence which great ideas, burning in the national heart, have upon the physical constitution of individuals?

If Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, born to fulfil the great public hope of the East, how came he to be assured of his claims? By what means did he know himself to be the Christ? Not by external and supernatural displays of power, which at the best are uncertain, was truth borne into the mind of Jesus. It was within, through his own clear and sure consciousness, that the Highest was manifested to him. And it could only have been in this way that he knew himself to be qualified, by the truth which he possessed, to satisfy the hope not of his country alone but of the whole world.

Was it so? Was the Truth loved by him so devotedly, had he such experience of its power, that he could not help knowing it as the complement of humanity, making that whole?

Or, may it be that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah in any Jewish sense of the word, but that the passages, in which he is reported as directly or indirectly assuming that office, have taken their form and hue from the writers, who, being full of their Jewish ideas, were very liable to misunderstand his allusions to the heavenly kingdom?

That he far transcended the Jewish idea, that he was more than their Messiah, is very clear. Whether clothed in any official dignity or not, he is Heaven's best gift to us all, the brightest revelation that we know of the Highest.

I HAVE said that Lazarus was recalled to life by means of the strong life there was in him when he died. And that life was the inspiration of the revering affection which he cherished

for Jesus. I believe that Jesus himself came to life again after his crucifixion, by similar means.

That he was alive, and that he was seen and spoken with by Mary on the morning of the first day of the week, I hold to be established as a fact by the strongest possible evidence. I have endeavored to exhibit this evidence in detail elsewhere.[1] I shall not repeat it here, although I can hardly refrain,—the story of the resurrection of Jesus, as I gather it from the Four Gospels, is so wondrously true to nature. I content myself with saying in this place that it is wholly out of my power to conceive or desire more satisfactory proof that Jesus was alive and present on that memorable morning, than that which is woven into the whole fabric of the narratives of the event. I believe in the fact because the evidence compels me to believe it. I think an undue importance has been given to the fact. It is represented as the corner-stone of all faith in a life after death, and as having occurred with the express design of

[1] *Jesus and his Biographers*, and *A History of Jesus*.

confirming that faith. I cannot so regard it. Received as a fact, it certainly shows the superiority of the spirit over the flesh. But what was its special purpose I do not undertake to affirm.

As far as I am able to see, Jesus returned to life, moved by affection for his personal friends, to reassure them. His death confounded and crushed them. And had he not re-appeared, I think they would have gone back to Galilee, and resumed their old occupations. His reappearance put a new aspect upon the whole thing in their eyes. They were impelled perforce to assert the fact of his resurrection, and in testifying to that, they came, almost insensibly, to be witnesses before the whole world to his life and teachings. My belief is, that, through the singular power with which he was naturally endowed, he was inspired with the faith that he could return to life again after death, if he so willed. He willed it therefore. He had the purpose before his death to return after that event. He died with that purpose at heart. And as one goes to sleep resolved to awake at a certain hour, and at the proposed

hour does actually awake, so Jesus breathed his last with a like purpose. And it was this purpose, living in the hidden strength of his affection, that awoke him. Do I mean to say then, that I believe him to have been actually dead upon the Cross? Certainly. He was as truly dead as one could be who possessed in unprecedented fulness that interior life, which death, a mere physical event, cannot destroy, and which was so strong in him that it conquered death and repaired the physical derangement which death caused, and enabled him to awake as from deep sleep.

This representation of the way in which Jesus was restored to life will, I suppose, be considered an extravagant speculation. But it comes naturally from that account of his peculiarly endowed nature which I have given in these pages. It is in conformity too with the interpretation which I have put upon those momentous words of his addressed to Martha, and with the account given of the restoration of Lazarus.

Let it once be admitted that there was a peculiar power in Jesus, inherent in his being,

as a substantive fact, like any other force existing in nature, and it follows of necessity that there was a life in him that made it impossible that he should die as ordinary men die. The death-agonies of crucifixion could not reach that inner life, nor rob it of its essential power. And as it was able, while he was living, to repair the mutilations and diseases of others, it had power over his own physical frame to reanimate that.

How long did he continue on earth after his resurrection? Where was he and what was the mode of his existence from his resurrection to his final disappearance? What was the manner of his final departure? Questions which we can neither repress nor answer.

The popular belief in the Christian world is, that he ascended visibly into the sky and so disappeared. But there is no authority for this belief in the Four Gospels. Matthew says not a word of his final disappearance, neither does John. Mark says, "he was received up into

heaven and sat on the right hand of God." There is no intimation in these words that he rose visibly into the sky. When he was seen no more, the natural inference was that he had gone to heaven. We are accustomed to speak in the same way of our friends when they take their final departure. The language of Luke's Gospel is similar: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." That is, he was taken from their sight, and, as they very naturally concluded, was carried to God.

It is not easy to understand how no account of any visible ascension should be found in any one of the Four Gospels, if such an event actually occurred; but it is easy to see how inferences should grow into facts, and the story extant in the first chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles should have arisen out of the brief statements first made respecting his final disappearance.

The popular belief upon this point being thus without foundation in the Gospels, the question remains: What became of Jesus after his resurrection? How, when, and where did he finally

disappear? I can suggest no answer to these inquiries.

All that I have to say is, that whatever was the mode of his life after his resurrection and before his final disappearance, and however inscrutable the manner of his final dissolution,—granting that, in these particulars, his history was wholly out of the ordinary range of human experience, nevertheless, I believe that it involved no miracle, in the popular acceptation of the word. Singular as his state must have been, it violated no natural law; but, on the contrary, it was in harmony with pre-established laws, laws which, as we may suppose, come into operation only at very great intervals.

That there are laws or methods of action which come into exercise only at intervals of thousands of years, the first individuals of the human race, and indeed the first of every race of animated beings, attest. The first pair or pairs of human kind must have been brought into existence by a method entirely diverse from that, by which all subsequent human beings have been and are produced. But al-

though diverse, yet equally natural, equally in conformity to the established order of things. Such was the state of the planet at the time, that, although it is beyond our power to conjecture how it could have been, human beings appeared as a natural result of causes existing and active only at that juncture. It was just as natural for them, although without parents, to come into life then, as it is for a child to be born now in obedience to the now operating laws of generation. "We are led," says Sir John Herschel, "by all analogy, to suppose that the Creator operates through a series of intermediate causes; and that, in consequence, *the origination* of fresh species, could it ever come under our cognizance, would be found to be a *natural*, in contradistinction to a *miraculous*, process; although we perceive no indications of any process actually in progress which is likely to issue in such a result." "As in the natural world," remarks Professor Powell, "the only indications we have of the operations of the Divine mind are the manifestations of order; so whatever we ascribe to the same

source we can only conceive as worked out in accordance with the same principles."[1]

As in the first appearance of man on this earth we have an instance of the operation of causes which came into action then, and for the action of which, the due conjunction of conditions may not occur again for a myriad of years, so, in the peculiar condition of Jesus after his resurrection and in the manner of his final disappearance, why may we not have an illustration of similar laws? I repeat, I do not know, nor am I able to guess, what was the mode of his existence after his resurrection, or in what way he took his final departure from our world. But, whatever were the facts, that they were as truly in accordance with the natural order of things as the most ordinary facts are now, I have no question.

Jesus himself was a new fact in the world, of a most remarkable character. Powers, new on this earth, were developed in him. There was in him a stronger life than mankind had ever known. And it is not for us to assume that

[1] *Essays on the Spirit of the Inductive Philosophy, &c.*

such a life, a life so intense, could present no new and unprecedented manifestations.

Baptism.—I cannot gather with certainty from Mr. Parker's remarks upon *Baptism* and *the Lord's Supper* in his "*Discourse of Religion*," whether he believes that Jesus instituted these rites or not. The amount of what he says is that if Jesus did magnify these forms, it is a pity. If he did not, so much the more honor to him. He seems inclined, on the whole, to think he did not. But surely this is a question which, in simple justice to the great Teacher, it is worth while to decide. Mr. Parker would certainly claim, if persons should undertake, now or hundreds of years hence,—it makes no difference,—to comment upon his opinions, that they should at least take pains to determine what those opinions are.

There is nothing in regard to the Man of Nazareth, which more satisfactorily appears, in my view, than that he prescribed no forms,—

instituted no ritual. And herein did he manifest his consummate wisdom, and show that he so fully appreciated those great laws of Justice and Love which he taught, that he never thought of exalting any ceremonial observances to a level with them. His aim was not to create any positive institutions either as to times, places, or ceremonies. In this respect the Apostle Paul understood him perfectly. That great man, the first to catch the import of the Life of Christ, saw clearly, notwithstanding his rigid Jewish culture, that the observance of times and places is utterly at variance with the spirit of Christ's teachings, and that to lay stress upon any mere external observance was to show oneself ignorant of their meaning.[1] Baptism and the Lord's Supper are everywhere, save among the followers of Fox and Penn, accounted Christian Institutions. But whatever may be said in their behalf, the authority of Christ, rightly understood, cannot be claimed for them.

Baptism was a Jewish observance. It was

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[1] Rom. xiv, 5, 6; Galat. iv, 9, 10, 11.

used especially by John the Baptist, who preceded Jesus. Although he was himself baptized, Jesus baptized no one.[1] There are only two passages in which he is recorded to have mentioned Baptism; and these are found in the last chapters of Matthew and Mark. The genuineness of the last chapter of Mark, from the ninth verse to the end, is disputed, as it is wanting in many of the most accurate Greek MSS. But without dwelling on this fact, although it is worth noting, I think it of much more importance to consider, that single verses and phrases are not to be relied upon unless they harmonize with the general tenor of the Records, because the writers evidently never studied to be literally exact, and if they had, we cannot now be sure that we have their precise words. In reference to this very subject of Baptism, John states three times in so many words that Jesus baptized.[2] And yet, after all these repetitions of the assertion, he contradicts it, and declares that Jesus himself baptized *not:* —a very remarkable instance of the popular

[1] John iv, 2. [2] John iii, 22 and 26, and iv, 1.

and unguarded way in which the New Testament histories were composed. We are bound, therefore, to take care how we give any weight to single passages, which are not only not supported by the pervading spirit of these books but in manifest inconsistency with it.

As baptism, the bathing of the outward person in sign of inward cleansing, was a form familiar among the Jews, which John had rendered popular at the time, and by which the people signified that they cleansed themselves in preparation for the coming kingdom, it is not difficult to see how, in the only two passages, strictly speaking in the one only passage, in which Jesus is stated to have enjoined this observance, words to this effect may have been attributed to him which he did not use, and when all that he said was, that his disciples should publish the Truth and bring all men to the acknowledgment of it. Had he attached the least importance to the sign, to the ceremony of Baptism, how is it to be accounted for that he made no mention of it in the very particular directions which he gave to his apostles

in the tenth chapter of Matthew. Be it ever remembered that he never baptized any one.

And besides, John the Baptist states in very striking language the difference between himself and Jesus. "I," he says, in effect, "baptize you with water, but he, who is coming after me, and is so much my superior that I am not worthy to carry his shoes, will baptize you as with wind and fire from heaven. Water is the symbol of my influence, water, which, cleansing as it is, affects only the outward person, but the symbols of his influence are more penetrating elements, *wind* and *fire*."

[The Greek word, translated as it is '*Ghost*,' or, as it may be, '*Spirit*,' in Matt. iii, 11, and in John iii, 5 and 8, has no word in English that entirely corresponds to it. It is untranslatable except by a paraphrase. Its general signification is air, breath, wind, spirit. But it represents air both in its subtle nature as air, and in its strength as wind. In the passage in John, above referred to, it is first translated wind, and afterwards spirit: 'The *wind* bloweth where it listeth,' &c., the allusion is primarily to the wind or material atmosphere to which

the immaterial life, the spirit, (*spiritus*,) is described as analogous.]

In brief, as I understand the Record, Jesus neither enjoined Baptism nor forbade it. But he did condemn again and again with solemn emphasis all formalism, the putting of the shadow for the substance, sacrifice before mercy.

The Lord's Supper.—I seek in vain for any evidence that Jesus designed formally to institute what is now observed as a sacrament. The word *sacrament*, from a Latin word that signifies the oath by which the Roman soldier bound himself to the service of his commander, nowhere occurs in the New Testament. The "Do this in remembrance of me," has no sound to my ear of command. I cannot hear in it the tone of one devising and instituting a ceremonial observance. It comes to me as the breathing of affection, the agonized yearning of a lonely heart, on the brink of a terrible death, for a place in affectionate and grateful hearts.

There is no hour in the world's history less marked by formality than that, when Jesus asked to be remembered.

Let the hour and the circumstances be considered. He was seated for the last time at supper with his few personal friends. Although they were very devotedly attached to him, yet they did not understand him. In the things nearest and dearest to him, he was utterly alone. He had no human sympathy in what most interested him. And yet who was ever made for sympathy as he was, he, who felt so deeply for all the sorrows that burthened the hearts of men! How greatly would he have been cheered, had he been surrounded, as the Grecian sage was, by friends, fully appreciating and warmly approving! He longed, I believe, to repose upon some human heart, and to feel that that heart understood his purposes and entered into his trials. I discern this longing in the desire which he expressed for remembrance.

It may be gathered from his history that the fearful fate that awaited him, was, from a very early period, constantly presenting itself to his

mind. When the people thronged around him, expressing their wonder at some extraordinary cure that he had wrought, and gazing at him with admiration, we find him talking to his disciples about the violent death that he was to suffer.[1] As the end drew near, everything that occurred reminded him of his death. Thus, when Mary, in the spirit of a munificent hospitality, and to express her reverence for him, poured the costly ointment upon his person, it instantly reminded him of his burial. In the same way, when, seated with his disciples, at their last supper, he broke the bread and poured out the wine, instantly, according to the obvious habit of his mind, he saw a resemblance, between these and his body about to be lacerated and his blood to be shed upon the Cross. "It is my body," he says, "it is my blood." And then with the most natural feeling in the world he gives the bread and wine to his friends, as the mementos of his love. Alone as he was, since he could not have any immediate sympathy, deprived of the reality, he comforted

[1] Luke ix, 44.

himself with the hope of having his labor of love gratefully cherished in remembrance when he himself should be on earth no more. I cannot well imagine anything more incongruous with such a state of mind than the formal institution of a rite.

It is because I look upon him as thus moved on that memorable evening, that the observance of a commemorative service, having him for its object, and founded upon this touching incident of the last supper, has, in my view, an obvious propriety. It may be of the simplest character possible. Some form is requisite to make the occasion social. The simple exhibition, at stated times, of a broken loaf of bread and a cup of wine would suffice for the purpose. It is not necessary that either should be tasted. Let them be placed in view, and let a voice be given to these mute memorials by those who unite in the observance. Let no thought be entertained of excluding any who desire to be present. The observance can stand only on a level with other social religious exercises, to which all are made equally welcome.

I have no idea that any thought passed

through the mind of Jesus, either of restricting the remembrance of him to his immediate friends, or of perpetuating and extending it. One only thought possessed him, and that was, that it should be held in affectionate remembrance that, as bread and wine nourish and refresh, so he had given his body and his blood for the benefit of men. Not a formal, but a personal recognition he longed for. His appeal was, in a manner, addressed to the universal heart of humanity, and must be felt by all who are impressed by the divine beauty of his life. Therefore, a service, having for its object the commemoration of Jesus, if observed at all, should be observed, not as a positive duty enjoined in a tone of authority, but as a sacred offering of gratitude and friendship, not because there is any mystical virtue in the bread and wine, but only because they make an occasion for communing with his Godlike Humanity.

Is it any wonder that Jesus of Nazareth is not even yet understood? No great man ever was understood all at once. In the moral world, as in the material, greatness requires, in order to be appreciated, that the spectator should not stand too near. The world has always had to take time to understand great men. The way of the world is, when they first appear, to treat them with ridicule and abuse, and hunt them out of life as fiercely as possible, and then, after a space, to rush to the other extreme, and confound all intelligible ideas of them by extravagant adulation.

In no instance has this way of the world been more strikingly shown than in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. But the fact that it is now nearly two thousand years since he lived, and that, during all this time, men have been wrangling about him, and have not yet come to any clear and general decision as to who or what he was,—is it not a most impressive tribute to his greatness? Does it not show that he was no ordinary person, to be measured and

seen through at a glance? His dimensions must be sublime to have cast so huge a shadow over the ages.

And yet that the world is so slow in coming to a right understanding of him is not owing to any mystery in him. The special mark of Greatness is Simplicity; and Jesus is the greatest because the simplest of human beings. His truth is transparent as crystal. All Nature shines through it. His character is indivisibly single. And for this very reason, because he was so profoundly imbued with the simplicity of Nature, even in the very respects in which he was new and original, men, sophisticated by their arts and artifices, have failed to understand him. By the insatiable passion for the strange, which is unable to perceive the stupendous miracle of the visible Universe because it is familiar, we are blinded to the simple beauty of the Man of Nazareth. So far astray are men thus led from the divine simplicity of Truth, as to believe that he was the very Godhead, Uncreated and Incomprehensible, while every line of his history is the history of a suffering, dying man!

According to the representation given of Jesus in these pages, he had no means of religious certainty differing in kind from the means of certainty open to all men. That is to say, as we are, so was he, in this world, surrounded by the same silence, the same darkness, exposed to the same questionings, liable to be bewildered by the same mysteries. I do not believe that any more direct communications were made to him than may be made to us all, or that any method of religious knowledge was possessed by him that was out of the course of Nature, and not provided by the established laws of the spiritual world.

In so saying, I am not intimating that he had not the strongest grounds possible for the convictions which he cherished, grounds, to which no conceivable miracle could have added any strength. He knew himself to be in the right, beyond the possibility of doubt. Knowing this, he knew with equal certainty that he was speaking the word, doing the will of the Highest. This he knew by the decisive testimony

of his own consciousness, the strongest possible testimony, the surest foundation of faith. Suppose that he had read the divine will written out in visible characters on the sky, and an articulate voice had spoken to him out of a cloud, when the vision and the voice had ceased, if he had not had the interior and ever-present evidence of his own sense of truth, what could have saved him from suspecting that he had been the dupe of an illusion?

Therefore I say, it was upon no uncertain basis of sensible appearances and audible sounds that the faith, or rather knowledge of Jesus, reposed. As truth comes to us, so it came to him, from within. And as it required, so it indicates the greatest spiritual strength in him to maintain himself unmoved at the lofty point of personal conviction which he reached.

Consider the case. There he stood, a young man, having a faith which no one understood, an ideal far above what the world even yet has realized. What was truth to him was truth to no one else in anything like the same degree. He was moved from within, without the shadow of a misgiving, to say and to do what aroused

the most determined opposition. He was conscious of no purposes but the most beneficent. And yet he was instantly met with fierce contradiction from all that the world esteemed pious and honorable. Wonderful is it that he never faltered, and was never driven to the madness of doubt and denial. Only once, and that was only for a moment, in his extremest agony, did he express himself as if he were forsaken of God. If man ever breathed, who had reason to question the Eternal Providence, it was he. And yet he not only retained his self-possession under this terrible trial, but retained it so perfectly that the sweetness of his humanity was never embittered, the loftiness of his ideal never abated; and, utterly dark as his outlook must have been, he never beheld the Overruling Power in any other light than as Infinite Goodness symbolized by the tenderest of all relations, the relation of a parent. In the desolation of a solitude more complete than was ever before or since endured by man, he was calm and wise, and as full of trust in the Truth as if he were cheered by the sympathy of the whole world, never losing faith in God

or man. In the centre of this immeasurable mystery of Being, his personal life, rounded off into a consistency with itself and with all things, as simple and grand as Nature herself, stands a finished representation and image of the True and the Perfect, and is the one fact external to us, on which, as on a rock amidst storm-tost billows, we may repose in inexpressible peace. Although light should break from no other point on earth and in heaven, here, from the personal character of Jesus of Nazareth, fashioned to so marvellous a beauty in the darkest circumstances, so lofty and so symmetrical, comes an illumination that extends far and wide, down through the mysteries of Life and Death, and up to the Infinite God. The words of Jesus, to which the Eternal voice within bears witness, being transmuted into a life and forming that into harmony with all nature, and irradiating it with beauty, are thus shown to be the words of Truth.

Thus actualizing the holiest Ideal with an unprecedented grace and completeness, the Life of Jesus, addressing the highest that is in us, is invested with great power, power to sus-

tain and cheer us when we reel and totter, bewildered amidst the yawning depths and imminent heights of Being. Sympathy is a necessity of our nature, and very few are there who do not sometimes need something without to reflect the light within,—something external to lean upon. Is it an instinct? Is it a weakness? Whatever it is, Glory to God in the highest that, amidst the multitude of doubtful supports, beliefs and no-beliefs, that are offered us, there is One support, for the sufficiency of which we have every voucher that the reason, the admiration, the reverence, the love,—every good instinct and sentiment of our nature,—can supply!

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